THE CONCEPT OF GOD IN THE TWO EARLIEST UPANISHADS

English

by !Bsdicjtipq!Dpsofmjvt!Fmfokjlbm

Cover Design : C.N.Karunakaran

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(The Brihadaranyaka and the Chandogya)

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Foreword

A study on Hinduism is not easy. Although a cultural heritage pervades it all through out, to find order and logic one has to come up to the Indian schoolmen, but to understand the Indian schoolmen, one has to begin with the early Vedas. What the Indian schoolmen did was mainly to systemize the early Vedic lore, comment on it and develop it into different systems.

But the difficulty is not a sufficient reason to deepen our ignorance, already too deep. Any study on Hinduism, however superficial it may be, is worth its while, since it could serve to make our ignorance more shallow. And this is the only word of apology we could find to excuse ourselves of our blunt attempt.

With the present dissertation titled ‘The Concept of God in the two earliest ‘Upanishads’ we make an attempt to connect together all the scattered thoughts regarding the concept of God lying scattered in the Brihadaranyaka and the Chandogya Upanishads. The Upanishads being the work of various authors who lived

in different times with different views, the only possible means of connecting their teachings together would be by considering them as a sort of evolution. But unfortunately there is no chronological order in the Upanishads and consequently a chronological construction of the evolution of the concept of God in the Upanishads becomes an impossibility. We have to follow the ideas and construct them in the order of evolution of the ideas. This order may not always correspond to the chronological order. But it is, no doubt, the most effective method in the absence of a chronological order. The ideal thing, of course, would be to expound the doctrine of a single author. But the thoughts of authors, individually taken, are too short and fragmentary and insufficient for a dissertation. We have taken the authors of the two earliest Upanishads and expounded their teachings in the order of evolution of ideas.

As regards the contents, the first chapter is introductory. Since some preliminary notions on the Upanishads may greatly help us to follow the teachings of the Upanishads, We thought it proper to give it in an introductory chapter on the notions on the Upanishads. The second chapter will give an idea of the concept of

God in the pre-Upanishadic Indian mind and will help us to see the relation of the Upanishadic concept of God with that of the pre-Upanishadic thinkers. The third, the fourth and the fifth chapters will treat properly the Upanishadic concept of God.

As regards the method of interpretation we have tried always to stand by the text without getting prejudiced by any sectarian school or by any particular turn of mind. We have made reference to the Indian schools wherever it was found necessary. We have also referred to some of the western thinkers who have concepts similar to those of the Upanishads. These references are not, however, quite complete.

The bibliography on the Upanishads is too vast to get entered fully in a dissertation like this. We have mentioned most of the works, which have direct bearing on our theme. All the same, we have to confess, that we were unable to get some of the most recent works and articles written on the Upanishadic problems. We hope to consult them and complete our work.

We take this opportunity to express our filial gratitude to His Grace Most Rev. Joseph Attipetty,

Archbishop of Varapoly. We express our sincere thanks to professor Fabro, the dean of the Faculty, for his unceasing encouragement and efficacious direction and help, and to Msgr. Cenci whose deep knowledge on the philosophical problems was always at our disposal, although we were unable to utilize it fully. It gives us great pleasure to express our indebtedness also to professor Innocenti who has been very helpful to us and to the other professors and students who have helped us in one way or other in preparing this humble dissertation.

This Dissertation, though submitted for the Doctorate of Philosophy in the year 1949, was not published so far.

Now, some of the scholars who read it, expressed their desire to have it published, since they thought it would be helpful for the students of Indian Philosophy to get initiated into the Vedic Scriptures.

Deep-felt gratitude to those scholars, especially to Rev. Dr. Jose Thachil, Professor of Indian Philosophy and Dean of studies in the Department of Philosophy of the Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy, Aluva, Rev. Dr. Bosco Correya, Rector,

Sacred Heart Philosophical College, Aluva, Dr. K.S. Radhakrishnan, Professor, Department of Philosophy, Maharajas College, Ernakulam, Professor Juse Payathuruthy, for their valuable suggestions and to Rev. Dr. Douglas Pinheiro who took the trouble to check up the Text with the Bibliography and the foot-notes.

Archbishop Cornelius Elanjikkal

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List of Abbreviations

A.V.	=	Atharva Veda
Br. Up.	=	Brihadaranyaka Upanishad
Ch. Up.	=	Chandogya Upanishad
E.R.E.	=	Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics

I.C.	=	Indian Culture, Journal of the Indian Research Institute.
J.A.O.S.	=	Journal of American Oriental Society.
J.R.A.S.	=	Journal of Royal Asiatic Society.
R.V.	=	Rig-Veda.
S.B.E.	=	Sacred Books of the East.
Sat. Br.	=	Satapata Brahmana.
Sve. Up.		Svetasvatara Upanishad.
V S.	=	Vedanta Sutras.
Sum. Theol.	=	Summa Theologica

Other signs used are the most ordinary ones.

CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTORY

$ I = NOTIONS ON THE UPANISHADS IN GENERAL

A/- UPANISHADS THE CONCLUDING PORTION OF THE VEDAS

The Hindu Scriptures are divided into two main groups, the revealed and the non-revealed. The revealed are called the *Sruti* (hearing)[1] , because the truths contained therein are supposed to have been heard by the early Indian sages directly from God. The non- revealed Scriptures are called *Smriti* (remembrance, tradition)[2] , because, they embody the traditional teaching of the Hindu sages based on *Sruti*. Under the head of the *Smriti* Scriptures come the *Dharma Sastras* (laws), the *Darsanas* (different

philosophical schools), the *Puranas* and *Itihasas* (legends and epics) the *Vedandas* (appendages to the *Vedas*), the *Upavedas* (supplementary), and the *Bagavad Gita* (Song of the Lord). The *Sruti* Scriptures, with which we have to deal at present, contain the four Vedas, the *Rig- Veda*, the *Sama- Veda*, the *Yajur Veda,*[3] and the *Atharva- Veda*.

Each *Veda* consists of four parts, the original texts known as the *Mantras*, the ritualistic explanations known as the *Brahmanas*, the contemplative part known as the *Aranyakas* and the philosophic commentary known as the Upanishads. The *Mantras*[4] consist of hymns and praises in honour of gods and are therefore known as the *Upasana Kanda* (portion dealing with prayer and praise). The *Brahmanas* [5] give elaborate directions for the performance of innumerable sacrifices and rites and therefore they are called the *Karma Kanda* (portion dealing with rites to be performed.) The *Aranyakas* [6] and the Upanishads treat knowledge and so they are known as the *Gnana Kanda* (portion dealing with knowledge).

The Upanishads come after the *Aranyakas*, the *Aranyakas* after the *Brahmanas* and the *Brahmanas* after the *Hymns*. But this order does not imply that all the hymns were composed before the *Brahmanas*, all the portions of the *Aranyakas* before the Upanishads. It means only the general order, for it may be certain that some portions of the *Brahmanas* appeared before the period of the Vedic hymns was over, some portions of the *Aranyakas* appeared before the period of the *Brahmanas* was over and some portions of the Upanishads appeared before the period of the *Aranyakas* was over.

“In India”, writes Hopkins, “no literary period subsides with the rise of its eventually succeeding period. All the works overlap. Parts of the Brahmanas succeed, sometimes with the addition of the whole books, their proper literary successors, the Upanishads. Vedic hymns are composed in the Brahmanic period.”[7]

We may say, therefore, that the Upanishads, in general, form the concluding portion of the Vedas. The

Upanishads are also styled as the Vedanta (the end of the Vedas)[8] . The name Vedanta was however given to the Upanishads not only because they form the concluding portion of the Vedas but also because they are the end or purpose (anta = end = purpose) of Vedic study.[9]

B/ THE MEANING OF THE WORD

The word Upanishad has been derived variously according to different authors. “Most of the European Scholars,” writes Max Muller, “are agreed in deriving upa-ni-shad from the root sad, to sit down, preceded by the two prepositions, ni down and upa, near, so that it would express the idea of session, or assembly of pupils sitting down near their teacher to listen to his instructions.”[10] But he continues “Such word, however, would have been applicable, it would seem, to any other portion of the Veda as well as to the chapters called Upanishads and it has never been explained how its meaning can thus be restricted. It is still more strange that Upanishad in the sense of session or assembly, has never, so far as I am aware, been met

with.”[11] All the same Max Muller admits that Upanishad originally meant session. “The history and the genius of the Sanskrit language leave little doubt that Upanishad meant originally session, particularly a session consisting of pupils, assembled at a respectful distance round the teacher.”[12]

Many Indian Scholars following Sankara,[13] the great Indian exponent of the Upanishads, derive Upanishad from the root, sad, in the sense of destroying and approaching and upa, near, with ni, certainly. Upanishad would thus mean that which destroys ignorance and help us to approach Brahman, the ultimate reality.[14] This view, however, is being slowly given up also by Indian writers since Upanishad in this sense does not occur anywhere.[15]

Paul Deussen follows the view of some Indian writers[16] who explain Upanishad in the sense of *rahasyam* (secret). “If the passages collected in my index to the Upanishads”, writes Deussen, “are examined, it will be at once evident that, taken together, they involve the meaning, ‘secret sign, secret names,

secret import, secret word, secret instruction' and that therefore to all the meanings the note of secrecy is attached. Hence we may conclude that the explanation offered by the Indians of the word Upanishad as *rahasyam*, 'secret' is correct.[17] This opinion is commonly held today by both Indian and European writers.[18]

We can very well add here that the Upanishad taken in the sense of secret knowledge includes also the other meanings, for this secret knowledge is imparted by the teacher to the disciples sitting around him and the scope of this secret knowledge is to destroy ignorance and approach the ultimate reality.

C/ THE NUMBER OF THE UPANISHADS

We are not certain of the number of the Upanishads. The researches, so far made, leave the question still in doubt. There are hundred and eight Upanishads according to the *Muktikopanishad* and the *Mahavakyaratnavali*,[19] but many more have been added to this number. Hundred and twelve Upanishads

have been published by the Nirnaya Sagara Press, Bombay.[20]

But all these Upanishads are not classical ones bearing on the Vedas. "It became a fashion in later times to write Upanishads in confirmation of any new system of philosophy. Thus a host of independent Upanishads came into being."[21] The classical ones are supposed to be those commented upon by the great *Acharyas* or quoted by them. Even these are numerous. But most of them are short and of little importance. The most important of the classical Upanishads are thirteen in number. They are the *Brihadaranyaka*, the *Chandogya*, the *Katha*, the *Isa*, the *Kena*, the *Prasna*, the *Mundaka*, the *Mandukya*, the *Taittiriya*, the *Aitareya*, the *Kausitaki*, the *Maitri* and the *Svetasvatara*. The first ten are included in the following traditional couplet:

"Isa-Kena-Katha-Prasna-Munda-Mandukya-Tittiri,
Aitareyam cha Chandogya Brihadaranyakam tatha"[22]

D/ THE DATE OF THE UPANISHADS

Indian Philosophy in general and the Vedas in particular bear no dates. Standing, however, especially on the internal evidence it is commonly held by the writers that The Upanishads began to be composed from 1000 B.C.[23] The earliest of them, therefore, are pre-Budhistic (before 600 B.C.). But the later ones are extended even up to the middle ages and mention is made even of an Allah-Upanishad, which certainly was composed after the Mohammedan invasion of India (1012 A.D.), and probably during the reign of Akbar (1564-84 A.D.), the Muslim prince who attempted at a synthesis of Islamism with Hinduism.[24]

Little importance is assigned to the later Upanishads. The important and the classical ones end with 300. B.C.[25]

E/ THE AUTHORS

The Upanishads are the work of the Indo-Aryan thinkers who lived between 1000 B.C. and 300 B.C. These thinkers, as it is clear in the Upanishads, do not

belong exclusively to the Brahmin caste. There is a good number of *Kshatriyas* too. Some of them acquired so great a reputation for learning that even the Brahmins used to go to them for instructions. We see, for instance, the proud Brahmin, *Balaki Gargia* getting instructions from the *Kshatriya* prince *Ajatasatru*[26] and the Brahmin *Gauthama* becoming the disciple of the *Kshatriya* prince *Pravahana*.[27]

From the fact that Brahmins went to *Kshatriyas* for instructions, some scholars, among whom Garbe[28] and Winternitz,[29] came to rather a hasty conclusion that the Upanishadic doctrine originated among the *Kshatriyas* independent of the *Brahmanas* and the *Aranyakas* which formed the sacred lore of the Brahmins.

It is true that in the Upanishads there pervades a spirit of speculation, a revolt against the ritualism of the *Brahmanas*, and we may say in this respect with Oldenburg that the Upanishadic speculation is “a genuine novelty.”[30] But at the same time we should bear in mind that the Upanishadic doctrines are

implicitly contained in the Vedic hymns, in the *Brahmanas* and in the *Aranyakas*. They become explicit in the Upanishads and take a new form. The *Brahmin* and *Kshatriya* thinkers are so mixed up in the Upanishads that no historical ground can be traced out to prove the *Kshatriya* origin of the Upanishadic speculation. Anyhow, the Upanishadic thoughts reached their height in the *Brahmin* mind. *Yagnavalkya*, the most prominent figure of the Upanishads, was a Brahmin.[31]

Also women used to take part in the philosophic discussions. We read, for instance, in the *Brihadaranyaka* Upanishad *Gargi*, the daughter of *Vachaknavi* questioning the great thinker *Yagnavalkya*: "I arise against thee, *Yagnavalkya*. As a hero's son from Benares or from Videha[32] strings the slackened bow and arises with two foe – piercing arrows in his hand, so I rise against thee with two questions."[33] *Maitreyi*, one of the wives of *Yagnavalkya*, is also presented in the Upanishads as a woman of great subtlety.[34]

It was a time of great quest for truth. No one was excluded from searching for truth. No one was excluded from imparting it to others. "The inquirers were so eager that either in receiving the instruction of Brahman or in imparting it to others they had no consideration of sex and birth."[35]

The Upanishads give the names of a good number of thinkers whose reflections are embodied in them. But unfortunately very little is known of these great thinkers. It is doubted even by Hindus[36] whether all the names mentioned in the Upanishads are factual or fictitious. R.D. Ranade writes: "Certain familiar names, such as those of Svetakethu, Aruni, Pravahana, and others which we meet with so frequently on the pages of the Upanishads, all these names, in relation to the specific doctrines that are connected with them are – a few exceptions apart – mostly poetic or pious fictions."[37]

We may be justified in thinking that many of these names were invented by the real authors for the most part according to the literary, doctrinal and artistic requirements of the case.

F/ NATURE

The Upanishads are a compilation of thoughts of many sages who had different views and lived in different times in India. The sages did not commit their thoughts to writing, which did not exist then. Their thoughts were handed over to posterity by means of oral tradition. These thoughts were at a certain stage, collected into one without any attempt at chronology or logic. And in this confused form, the Upanishads are presented today. What we see, therefore, in the Upanishads is but a heap of thoughts in fragments without any connection. The Upanishads as they are presented today, do not contain pure philosophy alone; there is a good amount of sacrificial rites. "One can hardly read", writes Cyril Bernard, "two pages without coming upon a medley of vastly differing thoughts and sentiments, some of them very sublime, while others are mixed up with mythological material from the Brahmanas with the added confusion of figurative language."[38]

In spite of all these confusions, the Upanishads are, on the whole, dominated by philosophic problems

of a high order. The central theme is the problem of the ultimate reality. It is the thirst for God that pervades all thoughts. "Whence are we born, where do we live and whither do we go? O, ye who know Brahman (God) tell us at whose command we abide here, whether in pain or in pleasure. Should time or nature or necessity or chance or the elements be considered to be the cause or he who is called Purusha, the man that is the Supreme spirit?"[39] "At whose command does the first breath go forth? At whose wish do we utter this speech? What god directs the eye or the ear?"[40] "What pervades the whole world?"[41] "What makes the unheard heard, the unconsidered considered and the unsettled settled?"[42] These are the usual questions of the Upanishads.

The Upanishads, however, do not aim at a pure speculation of the ultimate reality. The sages had always a practical aim behind their speculation. Knowing the ultimate reality they wanted to be happy, they wanted to be immortal. "What shall I do with that which is not immortal?" cries out *Maitreyi*, "teach me

that alone by which I can be immortal."[43] Philosophy arose not from a mere spirit of inquiry, but from a deeply – felt religious need.

"From the unreal lead me to the real,
From darkness lead me to light,
From death lead me to immortality."[44]

This has been all along the cry of the Indian soul.

As to the method of speculation, the sages tried to keep up great soberness. When *Gargi* presses her questioning too far regarding God, *Yagnavalkya* suddenly silences her with the warning: "Gargi, do not question too much, lest your head fall off. In truth you are questioning too much about a divinity about which further questions cannot be asked. Gargi, do not over – question."[45] Thereupon Gargi held her peace.[46]

This sobriety, though in itself very laudable, was carried very often to the excess and the Upanishads have been for the most part content with asserting without arguments and accepting without proofs. Very

often simile (*udaharana* = example) has been taken for definite proof. It is easily proved that this entire universe was once contained in potential form in Brahman, the Absolute, by showing that a tree is contained in a seed.[47] The production of plurality from unity is easily proved by showing that from the same lump of gold are shaped different articles.[48] There is no further questioning and demonstration.

In the meantime we should not forget the fact that sages reached many of the sublime truths by intuitions and guess works. In the exposition of these truths the sages were not helped by the systematic art of logic which was then still in the initial stage. The best form of exposition consisted in examples (*udaharana*). Hence their frequent recourse to this method.

The sages, however, did not always succeed in keeping up the spirit of sobriety. In spite of all their attempts to keep their mind in its limits, they failed to resist to the thrust of reason. They lost their balance and made a blunt attempt to explain fully the ultimate reality and consequently fell into pantheism.

G/ INFLUENCE

1) In India

Since the Vedas (including the Upanishads) were considered as revealed by God, the orthodoxy of the Indian philosophical systems was judged by their acceptance of the authority of Vedas. The philosophical systems which recognised the authority of the Vedas were called *astika* (orthodox) and those that did not recognise the authority of the Vedas were called *nastika* (heterodox).[49] The *astika* schools are six in number, the *Samkhya*, the *Yoga*, the *Vedanta*, the *Mimansa*, the *Nyaya* and the *Vaiseshika*, generally known as the six systems (*saddarsana*). The heterodox systems are principally three in number, the *Buddist*, the *Jaina*, and the *Charvaka*. A school or a system of philosophy might deny anything, e.g., the existence of God or the immortality of the soul, but if it accepted the authority of Vedas it was considered orthodox. On the contrary, a philosophical school or system might defend all the truths laid down in the Vedas, but if it repudiated the authority of Vedas, it

would fall flat on the Indian mind as heterodox. Hence, “later systems of philosophy display an almost pathetic anxiety to accommodate their doctrines to the views of the Upanishads, even if they cannot father them all on them.”[50]

It is true that the *nastika* schools repudiated the authority of the Upanishads and built up systems on their own authority. But even these systems had the Upanishads as their mental background. “There is no important form of Hindu thought”, writes M. Bloomfield, “heterodox Buddhism included, which is not rooted in the Upanishads.”[51]

2) Outside India

The influence of the Upanishads was not limited to the Indian mind. Though rather late, from the 17th century the Upanishads began to influence also the non-Indian thinkers. In 1675 the Upanishads were translated into Persian under the auspices of Dara Shukoh, the eldest son of Shah Jehan, an enlightened prince who openly professed the synthetic religious tenets of the Emperor Akbar and even wrote a book

intended to reconcile the religious doctrines of the Hindus and Muslims.[52] In 1801 Anquetil Duperron, the famous traveller and discoverer of Zend-Avesta published a Latin translation of the Upanishads from Persian.[53] This Latin translation, though unintelligible for the most part, attracted the attention of the German philosophers beginning with Fichte and Schilling and particularly of Schopenhauer. In his preface to his 'Welt als Wille und Vorstellung,' Schopenhauer writes: "If the reader, I say, has received his initiation in primeval Indian wisdom and received it with open heart, he will be in the very best way prepared to hear what I have to tell him. It will not sound to him strange, as to many others, much less disagreeable; for I might, if it did sound conceited, contend that every one of the detached statements which constitute the Upanishads, may be deduced as a necessary result from the fundamental thoughts which I have to enunciate, though those deductions themselves are by no means to be found there."[54] And he continues in his 'Pererga und Paralipomena': "How does every line display its firm, definite and throughout harmonious meaning! From

sentence deep, original and sublime thoughts arise and the whole is pervaded by a high and holy and earnest spirit. Indian air surrounds us, and original thoughts of kindred spirits. And oh, how thoroughly is the mind here washed away clean of all early-engrafted Jewish Superstitions,[55] and of all philosophy that cringes before those superstitions! In the whole world there is no study, except that of the originals so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Oupneketh (sic). It has been the solace of my life. It will be the solace of my death."[56] Through the great enthusiasm of Schopenhauer the Upanishads began to influence also the other European thinkers.

H/ THE COMMENTATORS

1) Indians

The Upanishads have been largely commented by the Indians. Since they were considered to be the infallible oracle of truth no orthodox Hindu could neglect the study of the Upanishads. Every Hindu thinker tried to comment on them and produce systems based on them. The most important of these systems,

in its direct bearing on the Upanishads, is supposed to be the Vedanta System. The most eminent teachers of this system are, however, divided in their views. Sankaracharya or Sankara (510 A.D.?) defends Absolute Monism (*Advaida vada*) and reduces all plurality into illusion (*Maya*). Ramanuja (1100 A.D.) defends Qualified Monism (*Vishistadvaida vada*) and considers the world as the body of God, and Madhavacharya (1228 A.D.) defends dualism (*Dvaida vada*).

None of the Indian systems, it is admitted today even by the Hindu Scholars,[57] adequately represents the doctrine of the Upanishads. The Indian systems are all unilateral in their interpretation of the Upanishads. The fundamental reason for this misinterpretation lies in the fact that the systems which claim to represent the genuine doctrine of the Upanishads started from a false premise. They took it for granted that the Upanishads were of divine origin. Being of divine origin they should contain infallible truths. And infallible truths cannot clash and contradict each other. Consequently they came to the logical,

but false, conclusion that the Upanishads contained only one view, be it monism or dualism, realism or idealism. The selection of the particular view was more according to the personal tendencies of each author. Sankara, for instance, took the monistic view of the Upanishads, because it appealed more to his mind. He brought forward all the texts that favoured the monistic idea, and modified the dualistic texts or explained them away. Madhavacharya of the dualistic tendency brought into the forefront all dualistic texts and twisted the monistic texts or explained them away. Every Indian Commentator of the past seems to have thus been handicapped in his interpretation of the Upanishads.

Today the Indian writers have become more universal minded. They admit that the Upanishads neither as a whole nor individually hold any uniform and consistent view. “Upanishads are”, writes, Dasgupta, “the melting pot in which all later philosophical ideas are still in a state of fusion,”[58] and Sir Radhakrishnan says: “so numerous are their

suggestions of truth, so various are their guesses at God that almost anybody may seek in them what he wants and find what he seeks and every school of dogmatics may congratulate itself on finding its own doctrine in the sayings of the Upanishads."[59]

2) Non-Indians

We saw that Schopenhauer had great appreciation for the doctrines of the Upanishads. But his interpretation of the Upanishads was subjective and one sided. His pessimistic temperament barred him in the right understanding of the Upanishadic doctrines. The fleeting nature of the universe asserted by some of the Upanishadic texts greatly appealed to his mind. He exaggerated them and reduced them to pure pessimism and found great solace in them. The production of the universe through the evolution of the will advocated by some of the Upanishadic sages was welcomed by Schopenhauer with keen interest. He neglected other views of the Upanishads and concluded that his doctrine was the same as those of the Upanishads.

Among the non- Indian commentators of the Upanishads great merit goes to Paul Deussen and Max Muller who have contributed much in popularizing the Upanishadic lore in Europe. They have practically spent all their life in the study of Hindu Scriptures. Thanks to the generous enterprises of these great scholars, many obscure problems, especially of their historical aspect, have become clearer today. But unfortunately even these great scholars, in spite of their goodwill and talents, have been greatly handicapped by the Kantian influence. They seem to interpret the Upanishadic world (plurality) in the light of Kantian phenomenon and the Kantian phenomenon in the light of the Upanishadic world, as understood by Sankara, with the result of practically misconstruing both. The world of the Upanishads is according to these authors the same as the phenomenon of Kant, and the phenomenon of Kant is for them a sort of illusion.[60] "The world is", writes Max Muller, "as we express it phenomenal only, but whatever objective reality there is in it is Brahman 'das ding an sich', as Kant might call it."[61] And based on this criterion Max Muller

concludes: “In one half verse I shall tell you what has been taught in thousands of volumes. Brahman is real, the world is unreal. The world is Brahman and nothing else.”[62]

The interpretation of Deussen and Max Muller is shared by writers like A.E.Gough. And they all extol Sankara as the most authentic expositor of the Upanishads.[63] In his preface to the philosophy of the Upanishads Gough writes: “The greatest expositor of the philosophy of the Upanishads is Sankara or Sankaracharya. The teaching of Sankara himself is the natural and the legitimate interpretation of the philosophy of the Upanishads.”[64]

A more objective and impartial approach to the Upanishadic Problems is made recently by some non-Indian writers, especially by the members of the Journal of the American Oriental Society. Worthy of special mention are Maurice Bloomsfield,[65] A.B.Keith[66] and Franklin Edgerton.[67] The scholarly articles contributed by Franklin Edgerton are the results of his unprejudicial approach of the Vedic problems.

$ II = THE TWO EARLIEST UPANISHADS

THE BRIHADARANYAKA AND THE CHANDOGYA

We add here a few notions in particular on the two oldest Upanishads, the *Brihadaranyaka* and the *Chandogya* with which we are concerned at present.

A/ - THE BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD

The name *Brihadaranyaka* is composed of the words, ‘*brihad’* (great) and ‘*aranyaka’* (forest). And this Upanishad is called *Brihadaranyaka*, because it is the largest of all the other Upanishads and was composed in the forest.

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is accepted by all the authors as the oldest.[68] But this does not mean that the whole of this Upanishad, as it is presented today, was composed before all the other Upanishads. The initial search of Brahman, for instance, of the *Chandogya* Upanishad presents undoubtedly an earlier thought than the advanced concept of Brahman exposed in the *Brihadaranyaka* Upanishad. When it is said

that the *Brihadaranyaka* Upanishad is the oldest, it has to be understood that the general body of this Upanishad precedes all the other Upanishads. The composition of the *Brihadaranyaka* began probably from 1000 B.C.[69] This Upanishad forms the concluding portion of the *satapata Brahmana* of the White *Yajur-Veda*. The *Brihadaranyaka* is a prose Upanishad and is divided into six chapters (*Adhyaya*) which are subdivided into articles (*Brahmana*) and the articles into verses. The first chapter has very little to do with philosophical problems. The author here takes a polemical attitude towards the worship of gods and gives the symbolical description of the origin of the world from the mystical horse sacrifice (*Asvamedhayaga*). But here and there we find some isolated philosophic thoughts on the origin of the world.

The philosophical chapters are mostly the second, the third and the fourth. Article fifth of the fourth chapter, wherein the dialogue of the sage *Yagnavalkya* with *Maithreyi* is narrated, is a mere repetition of the article fourth of the second chapter.

These chapters, however, which are mostly philosophical, do not contain philosophy in the pure form. A good amount of sacrificial rites also is there.

Among the thinkers, the most prominent is *Yagnavalkya* who is also the greatest of all the Upanishadic thinkers. Very little is known of this great thinker. What we can gather about him from the Upanishad is that he was a Brahmin by caste,[70] he had two wives, *Maitreyi* and *Kathyayani*[71] and at a certain stage he left both of them and the family and retired into forest.[72] The reputation for his learning was very high in the country and very often he has been accepted the winner of the philosophical discussions.[73] The other important thinkers are *Ajatasatru*, the prince of Kasi, *Janaka*, the prince of Videha, *Dadhych A'tharvana*, *Uddalaka Aruni, Gargi*, the daughter of *Vachaknavi* and Maitreyi, one of the wives of *Yagnavalkya*. The history of these thinkers is still to be written.

The central problem of the *Brihadaranyaka* is the quest of Brahman, the ultimate reality, by the knowledge of which man becomes one with Brahman.

B/ - THE CHANDOGYA UPANISHAD

Next to the *Brihadaranyaka* comes the *Chandogya* in antiquity[74] and length. *Chandogya* takes its name from the school of *Chandogins*, which produced it.[75] The date of the *Chandogya* may fall between 1000 B.C. and 600 B.C. It is attached to the *Sama Veda.*

Like *Brihadaranyaka, Chandogya* is a prose Upanishad. It contains eight chapters (*Prapadhaka*), which are subdivided into articles (*Khanda*) and verses. It originally formed a part of the *Chandogya Brahmana* in which it was preceded by two other chapters of sacrificial rites.

Philosophic ideas are dispersed in all the eight chapters. But the most important are the sixth, the seventh, and the eighth. Authors like Raja Rajendra Lal Mitra, E.B.Cowell[76] and Max Muller[77] following Sankara[78] hold that a portion of the 8th Chapter, where the inhabitation of God in the human heart is dealt with, has been introduced as an appendix to the rest to help

the weak-minded, who cannot conceive Brahman in perfect unity out of space and time and free from all qualities. "The eighth Prapadhaka", writes Max Muller, "seems to form a kind of appendix to the Upanishad. The highest point that can be reached by speculation had been reached in the seventh Prapadhaka, the identity of our self and of everything else with the Highest Self. This speculative effort, however, is too much for ordinary people. They cannot conceive the Sat or Brahman as out of space and time, as free from all qualities and in order to help them, they are taught to adore Brahman, as it appears in space and time, an object endowed with certain qualities, living in nature and in human heart. The Highest Brahman besides which there is nothing and which can neither be reached as an object nor be considered as an effect seems to ordinary minds like a thing, which is not. Therefore while the true philosopher, after acquiring the knowledge of the Highest Sat, becomes identified with it suddenly, like lightning, the ordinary mortal must reach it by slow degrees and as a preparation for what

higher knowledge which is to follow, the eighth Prapathaka, particularly the first portion of it, has been added to the teaching contained in the earlier books."[79]

The outstanding philosophic personality in the *Chandogya* is *Aruni* "who has been considered the greatest of the Upanishadic philosophers exception being made of Yagnavalkya."[80] The other important thinkers are *Santha Kumara, Narada, Pravahana, Prajapathi* and *Svetaketu*. Of all these thinkers what we know, next to their names, is but the fragments of their doctrines.[81]

The *Chandogya*, like the *Brihadaranyaka*, presents a continuous search after Brahman, but without any order or logic. It is a widely quoted Upanishad, especially for its "*Tatvam asi*" (you are that = Brahman), which forms one of the *mahavakyas* (great sayings) of the Hindus. The essence of man is the same as that of other beings and that is Brahman – this is the final conclusion of this Upanishad.

End Note

1 From the root *Sru* = hear.

2 From the root *Smr* = remember

3 The Yajur-Veda is preserved in double form, Black and white. The chief difference between these two collections lies in the fact that the white Yajur-Veda contains only prayers and sacrificial formulas, while the Black Yajur-Veda, besides the prayers and ritual formulas, contains philological and theological discussions regarding the words and rites to be used. Besides, the white Yajur-Veda arranges prayers perfectly and clearly, while the Black Yajur-Veda is lacking in such arrangements – Cf. Zacharias, *Studies on Hinduism*, Vol. I, p.85.

4 The date of the Vedic hymns is very much disputed among the authors. Sir Radhakrishnan, summing up different opinions says: "Some Indian Scholars assign the Vedic hymns to 3000 B.C., others to 6000 B.C. The late Mr. Tilak dates the hymns about 4500 B.C. We assign them to the fifteenth century B.C. and trust that our date will not be challenged as being too early" – S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, 2nd ed., p.67. The Vedic hymns are no doubt the earliest records of the Indo-Aryan mind.

5 The approximate chronological limits of the Brahmanas have been fixed by the critics between 1200 and 700 B.C. – Cf. Zacharias, *Studies on Hinduism*, Vol. II, p. 19.

6 The date of the Aranyakas may fall somewhere near 1000 B.C. – Cf. Zacharias, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 21.

7 Hopkins E.W., *The Religions of India*, pp.216-217.

8 Today the word Vedanta is equivocal. It stands also for the great philosophical school of *Uttara Mimansa* based on the Upanishads.

9 Cf. Cyril Bernard, *Hinduism in Spotlight*, Vol. I, p. 21, Max Muller, *Sacred Books of the East*, (here after *S.B.E*), Vol. I, p. LXXXVI.

10 Max Muller, *S.B. E.*, Vol. I, pp. LXXIX-LXXX.

11 Ibid., p. LXXX.

12 Ibid., p. LXXXI.

13 Cf. Roer, *The Twelve Principal Upanishads*: ***Text in Devanagari, Translation with Notes in English from Commentaries of Shankracharya and the Gloss of Anandagiri*** Vol. II, 2nd ed., p. 4.

14 Cf. Chakravarti, S.CH., *The Philosophy of the Upanishads*, p. 42; *Minor Upanishads*, pp. IV-VI.

15 Cf. Chakravarti, S.CH., op.cit., Cf. Minor Upanishads, loc. cit.

16 Cf. Ibid.

17 Paul Deussen, *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, p.10.

18 Cf. Dasgupta, S., *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p.38. Chakravarti, op.cit., p.42-43, *Minor Upanishads*, loc.cit.

19 Cf. *Minor Upanishads*, p. VI.

20 Cf. Dasgupta, op.cit.,p.28, note I, where the author mentions the name of everyone of them.

21 Cyril Bernard, *Hinduism in Spotlight*, Vol. I, p.107.

22 Zacharias, *Studies on Hinduism*, Vol. III, p. 21.

23 Cf. Zacharias, *Studies on Hinduism*, Vol. I,p.2; Vol. III, p.22; S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p.142

24 Cf. Max Muller, *S.B.E.*, Vol. I, p. LXVII.

25 Cf. S. Radhakrishnan, op.cit., loc.cit.

26 Cf. Br. Up., II, 1.

27 Cf. Ch. Up., V.3, Br. Up., VI, 2.

28 Cf. Hindu Monism, p.68.

29 Winternitz, *Geschichte der Indischen Literatur*, pp. 197-203.

30 Oldenberg H., *Vorwissenschaftliche Wissenschaft, die Weltanschauung der Brahmana-Text*, pp .3, 7.

31 Cf. Br.Up., II, 1.

32 The names of two Kingdoms in the ancient India.

33 Br.Up., III, 8,2.

34 Br.Up., II, 4, IV,5.

35 Dasgupta S.N., *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 35.

36 Cf. S.Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 143.

37 Ranade, *History of Indian Philosophy*, p. 137.

38 Hinduism in Spot Light, Vol. I. Page 116

39 Sve. Up., I, 1.

40 Kena Upanishad, I, 1.

41 Br. Up., III, 8. 1.

42 Ch. Up., VI, 1. 2-3.

43 Br. Up., II, 4. 3, Cf. also IV, 5. 3, III, 4. 2.

44 Br.Up., I, 3. 27. "*asato ma sad gamaya,*
tamaso ma jyotir gamaya,
mrtyor ma amrtam gamaya."

45 Br. Up., III, 6. 1.

46 Ibid.

47 Ch. Up., VI, 12.

48 Ibid., VI, 1.

49 The words *astika* (*asti* = is) and *nastika* (*na asti* = is not) are translated today as theist and atheist, nihilist and realist standing on the etymology of the words. But to the early Indians *astika* and *nastika* meant orthodox and heterodox in the sense of accepting the authority of the Vedas or denying it. – Cf. Dasgupta S., op.cit.,pp.67-68.

50 S.Radhakrishnan, op.cit., p.138.

51 M. Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Vedas, The Ancient Religion of India from the Rig-Veda to the Upanishads*, p. 51.

52 Cf. Max Muller, *S.B.E.*, Vol. I, p. LVII-LVIII.

53 Ibid., p. LVIII.

54 In the Italian translation by Savj-Lopez and G. De Lorenzo, Vol. I, Bari, 1928, pp. XIII-XIV.

55 Scopenhauer clearly exhibits here his shallow knowledge of the revealed religion and his partial knowledge of the Upanishads.

56 Quoted by Max Muller, *S.B.E.*, Vol. I, p. LX.

57 Cf. S. Radhakrishnan, op.cit., pp. 139-140; Cf. Dasgupta S.N., op.cit., pp. 41-42. Mayavati, *Minor Upanishads,* p. III.

58 Op.cit., pp.41-42.

59 Op.cit., p.140

60 Cf. Paul Deussen, *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, pp. 226-228.

61 Max Muller, *S.B.E.*, Vol. XV, p. XXXVII.

62 Max Muller, *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, p.122.

63 Cf. Chakravarty, op.cit., pp.162-164.

64 Gough, *The Philosophy of the Upanishads and Ancient Indian Metaphysics*, p. VIII.

65 Cf. Bloomsfield, *The Religion of the Vedas, The Ancient Religion of India from the Rig-Veda to the Upanishads*, New York, 1918.

66 Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and the Upanishads*, Harvard Oriental Series, Cambridge, Vol. II, 1925.

67 Franklin Edgerton, "Sources of the Philosophy of the Upanishads", in *J.A.O.S.*, Vol.36 (1917), pp.197-204; "Upanishads, What do they seek and why?" Ibid. 49 (1929), pp. 97-121.

68 Cf. Chakravarty, op.cit., p.81.

69 Cf. S.Radhakrishnan, op.cit., p.142.

70 Cf. Br. Up., III,1.

71 Ibid., II, 4.1., IV.5.1.

72 Ibid., II, 4.2; IV.5.2.

73 Ibid., III, 1,2,3,4,5,6,7, especially IV.1-3.

74 Cf. Chakravarty, op.cit., p.88.

75 Cf. Dasgupta, op.cit., pp.30-31.

76 Cf. E. B. Cowell, *The Twelve Principal Upanishads*, Vol. III., Madras, 1932, pp.249-50.

77 Cf. Max Muller*, S.B.E.*, Vol. I, pp.125-126.

78 Cf. Rajendra Lal Mitra and E.B., Cowell, *The Comment on the Chandogya Upanishads*, Madras, 1932, pp.249-250.

79 Max Muller, *S.E.B.*, Vol. I, pp.125-126.

80 Zacharias, Studies on Hinduism, Vol. III, p.30.

81 Cf. Ibid., pp.9-10, where we have mentioned that the historicity of many of these authors has been doubted.

CHAPTER II

THE BACKGROUND

The concept of God in the Upanishads did not emerge suddenly. It had its elements in the preceding portions of the Vedas, i.e. in the Hymns, in the *Brahmanas* and in the *Aranyakas*. They formed the background for the evolution of the concept of God in the Upanishads. We shall describe in this chapter the evolution of the concept of God in the pre-Upanishadic literature in view of its relation with the starting point of the Upanishadic evolution of the concept of God.

$ I = VEDIC POLYTHEISM

A/ - VEDIC POLYTHEISM PRECEDED BY MONOTHEISM

Vedism begins with polytheism. We have no literature to examine what the Aryan concept of God

was before the Vedic polytheism. The Aryans have left no records before the Indian Vedas and the Iranian Avesta, both beginning with polytheism. All the same it is an undisputed fact among the eminent orientalists from the concluding part of the nineteenth century, if we exclude, of-course, a few chronic atheists, that the Vedic polytheism was preceded by monotheism.[1]

The orientalists take their stand mainly on the philological grounds. "If I were asked", writes Max Muller, "What I consider the most important discovery which has been made during the nineteenth century, with respect to the ancient history of mankind, I would answer by the following short lines: Sanskrit Dyaushpitar, Greek Zeus Pater and Latin Jupiter. Do you know what this equation implies? It implies not only that our own ancestors and those of Homer, Cicero, Greeks and Romans, spoke the same language as the people of India…….. but it implies and proves that they all had once the same faith, and worshipped for a time the same Supreme Deity under exactly the same name, a name which meant 'Heavenly Father."[2]

Besides the philological grounds, there is the striking fact that there pervades throughout the entire polytheistic period the idea of a Supreme Being, a sort of movable divine Unity which is called now by one name, now by another. The Vedic polytheism, as we shall see later, is of a special type. There is no stable hierarchy of deities in it. No god remains the supreme all the time. Gods one by one, in turn, hold the supremacy. At one time god *Indra* holds the supremacy and all the other gods come under him.[3] At another time it is god *Varuna* who is supreme and all the gods including the very same *Indra* come under him.[4] The same can be said of other gods.

This special trait of Vedic polytheism appears to be a vestige of a pre-Vedic monotheism and indicates that the Indo-Aryans did not lose completely in the polytheistic period their preceding monotheistic concept. It implicitly survived in all their expressions. "There is monotheism", writes Max Muller, "which precedes the polytheism of the Vedas and even in the invocations of their innumerable gods, the

remembrance of a god, one and infinite, breaks through the mist of an idolatrous phraseology, like the blue sky that is hidden by the passing clouds."[5]

B/ - THE DEVELOPMENT OF VEDIC POLYTHEISM

It remains uncertain when and how the Aryans deviated from monotheism and fell into polytheism. But it is quite likely that they had fallen into polytheism before their entry into India. The deities like *Varuna*, *Mitra*, *Soma* and *Savitr*, held in common by the Indian Vedas and the Iranian Avesta,[6] suggest that the Aryan fall into polytheism had taken place before their separation from their central home.

In the development of the Indo-Aryan polytheism two efficient factors can be observed, viz. a poetic inspiration and an immature philosophical speculation.

1) Poetic inspiration

The manifestations of nature in India are striking. No foreigner can step into the Indian soil without getting impressed by her powerful phenomena. "We

need not say", writes Zacharias, "that the manifestations of nature in India are both portentous and imposing. Frequent lightning, terrific thunder-claps, scorching heat of the sun and the heavy rush of rain and the wind during the monsoon times are not only imposing but awe-inspiring."[7]

The early Indo-Aryans were, on the other hand, a race of highly developed poetic temperament as the Vedic hymns clearly show. Nothing could pass their mind unimpressed. "Being essentially of a poetic temperament they saw the things of nature with such intensity of feeling and force of imagination that the things became suffused with souls."[8]

They had most probably lost the monotheistic idea of God. Hence they could not subordinate the imposing and awe-inspiring forces of nature to an almighty God, a loving Father. They failed to subdue them or resist them. They imagined that these forces were external manifestations of unknown powers. The only refuge was to submit to them, to praise them and gain their favour. In fact they extolled the forces of

nature and worshipped them. "To our Aryan fore-fathers in their Asiatic home", writes Monier Williams, "God's power was exhibited in the forces of nature even more strikingly than to ourselves. Lands, houses, flocks, herds, men and animals were more frequently than in the western climates at the mercy of winds, fire and water, and the sun's rays possessed a potency quite beyond the experience of any European country. We cannot be surprised, then that these forces were regarded as the actual manifestations of either of one deity in different moods or separate rival deities contending for supremacy."[9]

2) Immaturephilosophical speculation

In deifying the powers of nature an immature philosophical speculation functioned in addition to the poetic element. The early Indo- Aryans did not stop with the sensible forces of nature. Their initial philosophical mind saw something behind the sensible manifestations. They asserted that every impressive phenomenon of nature, every group of physical forces of nature corresponded to an insensible power, which

guided the sensible manifestations.[10] The law of causality was at work in the young mind of the Indo-Aryans. Feeling the wind, for instance, the poet philosophers searched for its source: "In what place was he born and whence comes he?"[11] They saw an agent behind the wind and imagined this agent to be a god and they called the wind the vital breath of this god: "The vital breath of god, the world's great offspring, the god wherever he will, moves at his pleasure. His rushing sound we hear- what his appearance no one knows."[12] Seeing, likewise, the golden beams of the rising sun they went to an agent standing at the source of the beams and called this agent, the sun god:

" Aloft this all-wise shining god.
His beams of light are bearing now,
That every one the sun may see…
His beams of light have been beheld
Afar, among creatures: rays
Splendouring as were they (blazing) fires.
Impetuous- swift, beheld of all,

Of light the maker, thou, O Sun,
Thou all the gleaming sky, illum'st."[13]

Sometimes the names of gods are connected with the external manifestations. Thus for instance, the rain god is called *Indra* from *indu*, rain drop. Max Muller writes: "What can be simpler than the conviction that the regularly recurring events of nature required creation agents? Animated by this conviction, the Vedic poets spoke not only of rain, (*indu*), but of a rainer (*Indra*), not only of fire and light as a fact, but of lighter and burner, an agent of fire and light, a *Dyaus* (Zeus) and an *Agni* (ignis)."[14]

3) The Dravidian influence?

The first inhabitants, with whom the Indo-Aryans came in contact, were the Dravidians whose civilization preceded in India that of the Indo-Aryans. The excavations at Mohenjo-daro, besides confirming this point, have identified some of the idols of the Dravidian worship,[15] which indicate that the Dravidians had already fallen into polytheism before the Aryan

invasion of India. The hieroglyphics are not yet deciphered and the gods represented by the statues not determined.[16] It remains, therefore, still uncertain, how much the Dravidians influenced the development of the Indo-Aryan polytheism.

C/ - DEITIES

Since every impressive phenomenon of nature was deified, a good number of gods came to existence. Out of the 1028 hymns of the Rig- Veda almost all were composed in honour of gods.

The Hindus divide the Vedic gods into three main groups:

The celestial or sky (*dyuloka*) gods, the atmospheric (*antarikshalok*) gods and the terrestrial (*bhuloka*) gods.[17] The gods that came to existence first, if we attend the order followed in the expositions, were the celestial gods, then the atmospheric gods and finally the terrestrial gods. E.W. Hopkins writes: "The Hindus themselves divided their gods into highest, middle, and lowest or those of the upper sky, the

atmospheric, and the earth. This division, from the point of view of one who would enter into the spirit of the seers and at the same time keep in mind the changes to which that spirit was gradually subjected, is an excellent one. For, … Although the earlier order of regard may have been from below upwards, this order does not apply to the literary monuments. These show on the contrary a worship steadily tending from above earthwards; and the three periods into which all the Vedic theology may be divided are first that of the special worship of sky-gods, when less attention is paid to others: then that of the atmospheric and meteorological divinities: and finally that of the terrestrial powers, each later group absorbing, so to speak, the earlier"[18].

The most common among the celestial gods are *Varuna*, the agent of the dark sky and evening,[19] *Mitra*, the agent of dry sky and day,[20] *Surya*, the agent of Sun,[21] *Savitr*, the agent of enlivening or morning sun[22] and *Asvins*, the twin agents of morning and evening;[23] among the atmospheric gods, *Indra*, the

agent of rain[24] *Vata* and *Vayu*, the agents of air,[25] *Rudra*, the agent of storm and lightning[26] and *Maruth*, the agent of storm and clouds;[27] among the terrestrial gods *Agni*, the agent of fire,[28] *Pritvi* the agent of earth,[29] *Soma* the agent of Soma liquor[30] and *Ganga*, *Yamuna* and *Sarasvathi*, the agents of the rivers *Ganges, Yamuna* and *Sarasvathy.*[31]

One of the greatest deifications in the Rig- Veda is that of man, the noblest creature of the universe. The Vedic poets imagined that a god stood behind the man (*purusha*) as agent. This god is called *Purusha*. He is extolled as the supreme and as enveloping the whole universe:

"Purusha has a thousand heads,
A thousand eyes, a thousand feet, around,
On every side enveloping the earth,
Yet stands above it by ten fingers?
Whatever was and whatever will be,
All that is Purusha.
He is the lord of immortality.

All creatures are one-fourth of him, three-fourths,
Are that which is immortal in the sky."[32]

God *Purusha* does not belong to any of the above mentioned categories of the celestial, atmospheric or terrestrial gods. He is more of a universal type and was introduced probably at a stage when the Vedic poets began to overcome the particular deities and tried to reach the concept of a universal god.

D/- THE NATURE OF VEDIC POLYTHEISM

Vedism, as we mentioned above, presents a polytheism, altogether special. The gods are not presented in any organised system as in the Greek or Roman Pantheon, nor do they enjoy any stability in their importance and dignity. The deity which moved the devotion or admiration of the Vedic poets was, for the time being, the most supreme. With him, for the time, being was associated everything that could be said of a divine being; he is the highest and the maker of all, the distributor of all goods. All other gods come under him.

Thus, for instance, at one time god *Indra* is extolled as the supreme and all the other gods are placed under him:

“Great hath he grown, Indra, for deeds heroic;
Ageless is he alone, alone gives riches;
Beyond the heaven and earth hath Indra stretched him,
The half of him against two worlds together!
So high and great I deem his godly nature;
What he hath established there is none impairs it,
Day after day a sun is he conspicuous,
And, wisely strong, divides the wide dominions.
Today and now (thou makest) the work of rivers,
In that, O Indra, thou hast hewn them pathway …
‘T is true, like thee, O Indra, is no other,
Nor god nor mortal is more venerable
Thou didst the waters free, the doors wide opening,
Thou, Indra break’st the strong hold of the mountains,
Becamest king of all that goes and moveth,
Begetting sun and heaven and dawn together.” [33]

At another time god *Varuna* takes the supreme place: “This earth is his, to him belong those vast and boundless skies;/ Both seas within him rest, and yet in that small pool he lies. …/ Whate’er exists in heaven and earth, what’er beyond the skies,/ Before the eyes of Varuna, the king, unfolded lies.”[34]

And all gods come under *Varuna* including the very same *Indra.*[35]

Sometimes god *Agni* is extolled as “the god of the gods”[36] and sometimes god *Savitr*[37] and so on.

Max Muller calls this special trait of Vedic polytheism ‘Henotheism’, i.e. worship of single gods as the Supreme or ‘Kathanotheism’, i.e. worship of one god after the other as the Supreme.[38] It is a queer mixture of monotheism and polytheism. It is in respect to the past an unconscious survival of the pre-Vedic monotheism and in respect to the future a groping after monotheism.

$ II = MONOTHEISTIC TENDENCY

A/ ONE GOD, THE LOGICAL CONCLUSION OF VEDIC POLYTHEISM

The tendency of extolling gods, one after another, as the Supreme led to the logical conclusion that God was one and was called by different names. For, if all the supreme attributes are assigned to every god, in turn it follows that gods differ from one another only in name; that is, God is one, who is called by different names. And some Vedic poets realizing this fact cried out "They call the one by various names, Agni, Yama, and matriswan."[39] "But the worshipful divinity of God is one."[40]

This idea of the one God of the Vedas is clearly explained by Yaksha who lived as early as 650 B.C:[41] "There is but one God. On the earth he appears as the Fire or Agni, in the mid-region He appears as Indra and in the celestial regions He appears as Savitr. The various gods in each of these three plains are only aspects of these three manifestations of the one God."[42]

B/ - SUPREME GOD AND PARTICULAR GODS

1) Shift from the strict unity of God

While some sages reached the Unity of God and considered gods *Varuna*, *Indra*, *Agni*, etc. as merely names of one and the same God, others wanted to save particular deities, the agents of particular forces of nature, who would vanish completely if they were considered as mere names of one and the same god. Hence these sages made a distinction between the Supreme God and the particular gods. The particular gods remain always agents of particular forces in nature. They do not become the Supreme by turns any more. They always depend on the Supreme God, nay are produced by the Supreme God.[43]

2) Names and functions of the Supreme God

a) Hiraniagarbha, Visuakarman, Prajapati

In the later part of the Rig-Veda the Supreme God is known mostly by the names of *Hiraniagarbha* (golden germ),[44] *Visuakarman* (Maker of the universe)[45] and *Prajapati* (Lord of creatures).[46] The hymn to *Hiraniagarbha* describes him:

"In the beginning there arose Hiraniagarbha,
As soon as born he alone was the lord of all that is.
He established this earth and this heaven
Who is the God to whom we shall offer sacrifice?
He who gives breath, he who gives strength,
Whose command all the gods revere,
Whose shadow is immortality,
He, who through his might became King,
Of the breathing and twinkling world,
Who governs all this, man and beast ...
He who by his might looked even over the waters,
Which held power (germ) and generated sacrifice,
He who alone is God above all gods-
Who is the God to whom we shall offer sacrifice," [47]

In the earlier part of the Brahmanas Prajapati is the ordinary name for the Supreme God.[48] *Prajapati* produces everything including the gods. "In the beginning Prajapati was here alone. He thought to himself 'how can I obtain descendants.' He toiled and performed acts of penance and He produced… Agni and other gods."[49]

b) *Brahman*

In the later part of the *Brahmanas, Prajapati* is neglected. Another name to denote the Supreme God came into prominence by this time. This name is 'Brahman' which henceforth forms the nucleus of the Indian thought. All that later Hinduism did, beginning with the Upanishads, was but an intense search of Brahman, an attempt to find Him out and discover His nature.

1 = *The Etymology of Brahman*

The etymology of the word 'Brahman' is disputed among the writers. According to Panini, the Sanskrit grammarian (300B.C.), the word 'Brahman' derives from '*brah'* - to grow, to increase.[50] According to Max Muller it derives from '*brih'* or '*vrih'* - to strive, to grow, to erect.[51] According to some others it derives from '*br'* - to swell or to grow.[52]

2 = *Evolution of the meaning*

The word 'brahman' did not stand from the beginning of its existence to denote the Supreme God.

This meaning it acquired slowly through evolution. All the same from the very outset the word 'brahman' stood for something high and sublime.

In the early Vedic period, after having deified the powers of nature, the great preoccupation of the Vedic poets was to gain the favour of the gods. The favour of gods was gained by prayer either in the form of hymns or offering. And at this stage 'Brahman' stood to denote prayer. We read in the Vedic hymns: "O Indra, receive the prayers (brahmani) of the holy singers, victorious with men, hero in battles, Indra who hears the singers' supplications."[53]

"Every attempt", writes Deussen, "to explain this central idea (Brahman) of Indian Philosophy must proceed from the fact that the word Brahman throughout the Rig-Veda, in which it occurs more than 200 times, signifies without exception nothing more than prayer."[54]

Brahman, from its meaning prayer, was, however, transferred to mean also the man who prayed, the priest who gaining the favour of the gods through his prayer

became great and powerful. "We call King Soma to our aid and Agni with our songs and hymns (brahmani), Adityas, Vishnu, Surya and the Brahman priest, Brihaspati."[55]

In the Brahmanas the chief form of prayer became sacrifice. Every important undertaking had to be preceded by sacrifice in order to render it auspicious and successful and the whole universe was considered a product of sacrifice.[56] At this stage Brahman stood to denote sacrifice and sacrificer.

Some sages of the Brahmanic period, however, asserted that sacrifice in order to produce the desired effect, the sacrificer had to know the significance of the sacrificial rite. We find, thus, in some places after explaining a rite the Brahmanas add: he who "knowing thus" (evam vidam) performs the rite gets the benefit of the sacrifice.[57]

The fact that the knowledge of the sacrificial rites was necessary to produce the effect of the sacrifice led to the logical conclusion that sacrifice without knowledge was useless. Slowly the performance of

the sacrificial rites lost its importance and the knowledge of the sacrificial rites began to prevail. And we find expressions "he who knows thus"[58] without the "performs the rite". To achieve the benefits of the sacrifice, therefore, there was no need of performing any sacrificial rite, a mere knowledge of the significance of the sacrificial rite would be sufficient. Oldenberg writes: "The knowledge of the procedure, its psychic image, is magically connected with the procedure itself. The knower precisely through the fact that he knows – not because through his knowledge he acts skilfully and correctly, but by reason of the power of the knowledge itself, gets power over the entity or event known."[59] It is therefore, said that it is unnecessary actually to perform a rite. If you know it, you have as good as performed it.[60] At this stage the word 'Brahman' stood for knowledge.[61]

Finally in the later period of the Brahmanas, Brahman meant the ultimate principle of the universe, the Greatest and the Highest God. He is the Lord of creatures (Prajapati). He produces everything including the gods. "Brahman produced gods and having

produced them He made them ascend these worlds."[62] Brahman is produced by no one. He is self-existent (Swayambhu).[63]

This change of the significance of the word 'Brahman' as the ultimate principle and the Supreme God took place either from its significance as knowledge or as sacrifice. If we take Brahman's meaning as knowledge we may say that, since by knowledge (Brahman) anything could be obtained, knowledge itself was considered as the productive principle of everything. Knowledge was thus deified as the Supreme Deity. Edgerton writes: "All knowledge is to the Vedic mind, holy mysterious, religious or magical knowledge. It always possesses this magic power. Since knowledge means absolute direct power, what is more natural than that the holy, mystic knowledge (Brahman) of the universe should be half personified as the first principle, the controller of the universe?"[64] But if the meaning of Brahman is taken to denote sacrifice, we may say that since the whole universe was considered a product of sacrifice

(Brahman), Brahman came to signify the creative principle of the world, the Supreme God.[65]

C/ - MONOTHEISTIC NOTES

The Pre- Upanishadic sages reached, no doubt, the concept of a Supreme God who is not produced by any one. He is self-existent (*Swayambhu*)[66] . Everything else proceeds from Him.[67]

It is not an impersonal concept of the Supreme Being that the Vedic sages reached. The supreme God is the Father, the Maker of the universe. He is the Lord of the creatures. He knows all the creatures and provides for them. In a hymn to *Visuakarman* we read:

"Who is our Father, Producer, Maker,
Who every place doth know and every creature
By whom alone the gods their names were given
To Him every creature goes to ask Him" [68] .

God not only knows every creature but he knows also every minute action of the creatures. He knows even the sins committed by men. He can forgive sins. A hymn to *Varuna* when he was extolled as the Supreme sings:

"How can I get near Varuna? Will he accept my offering without displeasure? When shall I with a quiet mind see him propitiated? I ask, O Varuna, wishing to know this my sins: I go to ask the wise, the sages, all tell me the same: Varuna it is who is angry with thee. Was it for an old sin, O Varuna, that thou wishest to destroy thy friend who always praises thee? Tell me thou unconquerable Lord, and I will quickly turn to thee with praise, freed from sin. Absolve us from the sins of our fathers, and these, which we committed with our own bodies. It is not our own doing, Varuna, it was a slip; an intoxicating draught, passion, dice, thoughtlessness."[69]

The power of God is immense. He produced the universe by His might:

"Through whose might these snowy mountains are,
And the sea, they say, with distant rivers …
He through whom the awful heaven
And the earth were made fast
He through whom the ether was established,

And the firmament, He who measured the air in the sky."[70]

It is true that the particular deities were not abolished altogether. They continued to live in the minds of the Vedic sages as the agents of the particular forces of nature. But it should be remembered that these gods descended to the level of creatures. They are all produced by the Supreme God.[71] They depend on the Supreme God and revering Him they live.[72]

It should, however, be observed that the monotheistic ideas are not set forth in the Vedas clearly and distinctly. They are dispersed all over and often mixed with pantheism.

$ III- FALL INTO PANTHEISM [73]

Though the Vedic sages reached the concept of a Supreme God, the source of all, some of them fell into pantheism while explaining in detail the relation of god to the universe.

We find in some places God conceived with corporal attributes and the universe forming a part of God. In the *Purusha Sukta* hymn, for instance, where *Purusha* is considered as the Supreme God, we read:

"Purusha has a thousand heads,
A thousand eyes, a thousand feet, around,
On every side enveloping the earth …
Whatever was and whatever will be
All that is Purusha …
With Purusha as victim, they performed
A sacrifice. When they divided him,
How did they cut him up? What was his mouth?
What were his arms? and what his thighs and feet?
The Brahmin [74] was his mouth, the Kshatriya
Was made his arms, the husbandman his thighs,
The servile Sudra issued from his feet."[75]

In the *Satapata Brahmana* the Universe is considered as an emanation from the Supreme God, *Prajapati*, who being desirous of descendants toils and undergoes hard penances and finally draws out fire (*Agni*) out of his mouth and from fire produces the rest. "In the beginning only Prajapati existed. He thought to himself'- How can I obtain descendants?' He tortured him-self and mortified himself. Out of his mouth he produced the god Agni (fire), and from

Agni other things were produced."[76] In the *Taitiriya Brahmana* the production of the universe from the Supreme God, Brahman, is explained as a wooden furniture is made out of the wood or the tree. "Brahman was the wood, Brahman was the tree, from which heaven and earth were made."[77] And we find the sages emphatically asserting: "Verily in the beginning this universe was Brahman."[78]

In the *Nasadiya* hymn of the Rig-Veda an attempt is made to explain the universe by evolution. The sages begin with a state of neither being nor non-being. "There was neither what is, nor what is not."[79] But the great problem they faced was as to how from a state of neither being nor non-being the universe could spring up. To overcome this difficulty the sages introduced a seed covered by husk as the beginning state of evolution. They identified this seed with the state of neither being nor non-being.[80] This seed was later identified with mind and the mind was considered as a potentiality, which is neither being nor non-being. The universe is an evolution of the mind.[81]

The earliest commentary on this concept of Rig-Veda is probably a passage in the *Satapata Brahmana*. We find there the author attempting to identify the mind with the state of neither being nor non-being and thence explaining the universe. "In the beginning this (universe) was as it were neither non-existent nor existent: i.e., in the beginning this universe, as it were, existed and did not exist. Then there was only that Mind and the Mind was, as it were, neither existent nor non-existent. This mind wished to become manifest – more defined, more substantial."[82]

The authors of the *Nasadiya* hymn were not quite satisfied with the theory of the evolution of mind. They began to doubt whether the universe sprang out by the evolution of the mind or some other way. They do not, however, express the philosophical reason why the universe cannot evolve from a pure potentiality. They only question the authority of those who affirm it: "Who knows this? Who declared it here? Whence this manifold creation sprang?"[83] Though the sages do not express the philosophical reason why the evolution

theory could not fully satisfy them, it is not improbable that they perceived the absurdity lying under the theory, which explains the universe of actuality evolving from a pure potential state without the intervention of an agent. In fact, there is a tendency in the very *Nasadiya* hymn of demanding a self – existing agent, the Almighty power of God. "He from whom all this great creation came, whether His will created it?"[84] But this tendency was not developed properly and taken to its logical conclusion.

It is doubtful whether the Vedic sages got a clear idea of creation as production from the state of an absolute nothingness. Although in some places they affirmed that "the being was born out of non-being"[85] , they do not explain how this happened. It can seriously be doubted whether sages mean by no-being (asat) 'nothing' or 'the undeveloped state of things'. They do say that being was produced out of non-being by a self-existent agent. And there are places, where the sages affirm, that the Almighty Power of God made the universe. "He through whose might these snowy

mountains are and the sea, they say, with distant rivers. … He through whom the awful heaven and the earth were made fast."[86] But here, explaining how God made the universe, the sages assert that God made the universe out of pre-existing waters.[87] And the question how the pre-existing waters were produced is left unsolved.[88]

The human intellect, however sharp it may be, has its own limitations. Hence that great intellectual giant, St. Augustine exclaims: " I believe in order to understand and I understand better to believe" (Sermon 43.7.9. PL)

End Note

1 Cf. Muir, Original Sanskrit Texts on the Origin and History of the People of India, Their Religions and Institutions, p.412; Cf. Zacharias, Studies on Hinduism, Vol. I, pp. 93-96.

2 Max Muller, *Lectures on the Origin of the Religions*, p.148.

3 Cf. R.V., I.7.101, 131; VIII.12.51.

4 Cf. Ibid., I.24.25., IV.16.I-5.

5 Max Muller, *Lectures on the Origin of the Religions*, p.279.

6 Cf. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, pp.75-77.

7 Zacharias, *Studies on Hinduism*, Vol. I, pp.106-107.

8 S.Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p.72.

9 Monier Williams, *Hinduism*, p. 21.

10 Cf. Dasgupta, *History of Indian Philosophy*. Vol. 1. pp. 16-17

11 R.V., X.168.3.

12 Ibid., 3,4.

13 Ibid., I.50. I,3,4.

14 Max Muller, *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, p. 35.

15 Cf. Cyril Bernard, *Hinduism in Spotlight*, pp.27-32; Cf. Zacharias, *Studies on Hinduism*, Vol. I, pp.7, 18. The excavations of Mohenjo-daro took place in 1922. By these was unearthed a magnificent city in an astounding state of preservation and the Dravidian civilization of the Indus valley suddenly sprang into light after having lain buried for well neigh four thousand years.

16 Cf. Cyril Bernard, op.cit., p.31.

17 Cf. Zacharias, *Studies on Hinduism*, Vol. I, p. 111.

18 Hopkins, *The Religions of India*, p.39.

19 Cf. R.V., 1,25: II, 28; VII, 82; VIII, 41.

20 Cf. Ibid.,IV.13; VII,63;X,37.

21 Cf. Ibid.,1,115; IV,54;X,158.

22 Cf. R.V., 1,35; II, 38; III, 62.

23 Ibid.,IV,13;IV,52;VII,71.

24 Ibid.,I,51; II,2;II,30.

25 Ibid.,I,34;I,134;IV,47.

26 Ibid.,I,43;II,33; VII,46.

27 Ibid.,I,38; VII,56; VIII,7.

28 Ibid., I,1; I,58;V,7.

29 Ibid.,I,94;I,159;V,84.

30 Ibid.,I,91;1,15;IX,21.

31 Ibid., I.91; X,5; There are many other places where the praises about the above-mentioned divinities are sung. The places we have referred to are only examples.

32 R.V., X, 90. 1-3.

33 R.V., VI,30. Translation by E.W. Hopkins, *The Religions of India*, p. 96.

34 R.V., VI, 16. Translation by Muir, *Original Sanskrit Texts on the origin and history of the people of India, Their Religions and Institutions*, p.64

35 R.V., I,25; IV,42.

36 R.V., I, 94,13.

37 R.V., IV,54.

38 Max Muller, *India, What can It Teach Us*?, p. 146.

39 "Ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti, Agnim, Yamam, Matarisvaran ahuh" –R.V., I,164,46.

40 "Mahat devanam asuratuam ekam" – R.V., III,55.

41 Cf. Zacharias, *Studies on Hinduism*, Vol. I, p.101.

42 Nirukta, Chapter VII

43 Cf. Sat. Br., II, 2,4; Taitiriya Samhita, II, 1,1.

44 Cf. X, 121 – Translation by Max Muller, *S.B.E.*, Vol.XXXII, pp.1-2.

45 Cf. X,82,83.

46 Cf. X,121.

47 R.V., X, 121, 1,2,3,5,8.

48 Cf. Sat. Br., II,2,4; VIII,2,1,3; Taitiria Samhita, II,1,1; Cf. also Deussen, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*

49 Sat. Br., II,2,4.

50 Cf. Panini's grammar, 4. 145.

51 Cf. Max Muller, *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 52,70.

52 Cf. S.Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol.I, p.163.

53 R.V., I,78,4; See also I,52,7; I,37,4; VIII,32,27; A.V., III,19. It may be observed that the word brahman of the Vedas resemble very much the old Irish bricht and the old Icelandic brahr both denoting prayer – Cf. Zacharias, *Studies on Hinduism*, Vol. II, p. 5.

54 Deussen, *Outlines of Indian philosophy* Page 19.

55 R.V., X,141,3; Cf. also VIII, 37,1; VIII,69,9.

56 Cf. sat.Br., X,3,1; XIV,3,2; Cf. also Zacharias, *Studies on Hinduism*, Vol. II, pp.6-7.

57 Sat. Br., I. 2.5. 26; I.2.5.19; 1.4.1. 26, 28.

58 Sat. Br., X.4.2.31; X.5.2.23.

59 Oldenberg, *Vorwissenschaftliche Wissenschaft, die Weltanschauung der Brahmana-Texte*, p. 5.

60 Ibid., p.140.

61 Cf. Edgerton, F., "The Upanishads, What do they Seek and Why?" In J.A.O.S., p.110.

62 Sat.Br., XI, 2.3.1.

63 Max Mullur *S.B.E.*, XLIV, p.418.

64 Edgerton, F., "The Upanishads, What do they Seek and Why?" In J.A.O.S., p.116.

65 Cf. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p.124.

66 *Max Mullur S.B.E.*, XLIV, p. 418.

67 Cf. R.V., X.82.

68 Cf. R.V., X.82.3.

69 A.V., IV.16.1-5; Translated by Muir, *Original Sanskrit Texts on the origin and history of the people of India, Their Religions and Institutions*, p.64.

70 R.V., X.121.4-5. Translated by Max Muller, *S.B.E.*, Vol. XXXII, pp. 1-2.

71 Cf. Sat.Br.,II.2.4; XI .2.3.

72 Cf. R.V., X.121.2.

73 By pantheism we mean the system that denies the real distinction between God and creatures. The denial of the real distinction between God and creatures leads to the logical conclusion that there is only one reality. This reality in its abstract form results in an impersonal substance destitute of all individualities and

determinations, which totality in its abstract form, is all the same, called the deity.

74 Brahman here stands for the Brahman caste, the caste of priests. The other three castes are Kshatriya, the caste of Kings, Vaisya the caste of husbandmen and Sudra, the caste of servants. All the four are mentioned in the hymn.

75 R.V., X.90.

76 Sat. Br., 11.2.4.

77 Tait. Br., 11.8.9.3.

78 Sat. Br., XI, 2.3.1.

79 R.V. X.129.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

82 Sat. Bra. X. 5.3.1.

83 R.V., X. 129.

84 R.V., X.120.

85 "Asato sat ajayata" R.V.X.72.3

86 R.V., X.12.4-5.

87 R.V., X.121.

88 When the Vedic sages use the word srishta, srishti etc., which today are rendered into English by creator, creature etc., we have to bear in mind that these words did not carry those meanings in the Vedic times. They meant only maker, the object made etc.

CHAPTER III

THE SEARCH FOR BRAHMAN

The thirst for the Supreme in the Upanishadic sages was extremely strong. They learnt from those who preceded them that Brahman was the Supreme Being. Hence their whole attempt was at finding out Brahman. Though the Upanishadic sages learnt from their predecessors that Brahman was the Supreme being, they ignored that Brahman stood beyond the sensible world, as conceived by some of the pre-Upanishadic sages. We do not know why and how the Upanishadic sages ignored this. But the fact is that the Upanishadic sages began their search of Brahman in the sensible objects of the universe.

By searching Brahman, the Upanishadic sages did not simply attempt at satisfying their intellectual curiosity. They wanted to become Brahman, the Supreme, and find full satisfaction to all their desires. They constantly meditated upon the object identified

with Brahman, because they thought that by meditation man could become in the future life the object meditated upon in this life. "Man is a creature of reflection", they said, "what he reflects upon in this life he becomes the same hereafter, therefore, he should reflect upon Brahman." In fact, every time the sages identified Brahman with an object, we find them meditating on that object in order to become Brahman.

$ I = SEARCH FOR BRAHMAN IN THE SENSIBLE OBJECTS

A/ - IDENTIFICATION WITH INDIVIDUAL OBJECTS

Looking at the cosmic world with an ardent desire of finding out Brahman, the attention of the sages turned to the sensible objects of the universe. They examined every striking object. Since Brahman was the Supreme, they thought that the object which presented itself as the greatest among the sensible objects should be Brahman. Consequently they began to identify with Brahman that object which appeared to them as the greatest. But the same object did not appear as the greatest to all the sages.

Some sages, in fact, found water the greatest of all beings. They imagined that all the beings of the universe including gods were but different forms of water. "Water is the first form of all these, even of this earth, of the sky (*anthariksha*), of the heaven (*dyau*), of mountains, of gods, men and beasts, of birds, grasses and trees, of wild animals, worms, insects and ants, water is the first form."[1] Thinking that water would be the Supreme Being, these sages identified water with Brahman and began to meditate upon water hoping to become Brahman.[2]

Others, however, argued that water could not be the supreme, for, water is produced by rain and rain by heat and source of heat is fire. So fire comes above water.[3] Accepting fire as the Supreme Being these sages identified fire with Brahman and meditated upon it.[4]

But some others found space (*akasa*) above fire, for, everything existed in space. Outside space they could think of neither being nor action. Everything depended on space and they concluded that space was

the Supreme Being. "Verily space (*akasa*) is even greater than fire. Of the truth, both the sun and the moon (exist) in space, and so do the lightning, stars and fire. Men speak through space. They are born in space and merge into space.[5] " Finding space the Supreme Being these sages identified space with Brahman and meditated upon it.[6]

Still some others took air for the Supreme Being. They thought that air consumed everything and therefore it was the final goal of all. "Air is, indeed, the end of all. When the fire goes out, truly, it goes into air. When the sun sets, it goes into air. When waters dry, they vanish into air; the air verily consumes all."[7] Consequently, they meditated upon the air as Brahman.

We do not enumerate here all the objects mentioned in the Upanishads as Brahman and meditated upon. For one reason or another, in short, every striking object has been identified with Brahman by Upanishadic sages and meditated upon.[8]

B/ - COLLECTIVE IDENTIFICATION

All the Upanishadic sages did not cling to the identification of individual objects with Brahman. They probably perceived that every sensible object had its own greatness and importance in one respect or another, and therefore, none of the sensible objects individually taken could claim to be the Supreme Being. In fact, air seemed to be the Supreme in some respects and in other respects space and so on. Hence these sages left out the question of one object over the other. They took the whole sensible universe for Brahman and single objects as parts of Brahman, thus excluding no sensible object and at the same time giving priority to none. They said: "The fire is a part (of Brahman), the sun is a part, the moon is a part, the lightning is a part;"[9] "the earth is a part, the sky (*anthariksha*) is a part, the heaven (*dyau*) is a part, the ocean is a part;"[10] "the eastern quarter is a part, the western quarter is a part, the southern quarter is a part, the northern quarter is a part."[11] Every being of which the sages could think became a part of Brahman and Brahman became the

totality of beings of which the sages could think. In this collective identification of the sensible objects with Brahman, it is probable that the Upanishadic sages were helped by the concept of God of the pre-Upanishadic sages with their pantheistic tendency which considered God, as we saw above, as the sum total of the objects of the universe.

$ II - SEARCH FOR BRAHMAN IN THE SENSES AND THE HIGHER FACULTIES OF THE SOUL

A/ - SEARCH FOR BRAHMAN IN THE SENSES

The sensible objects either individually or collectively taken failed to satisfy the spirit of the Upanishadic sages. It demanded something higher than the sensible objects. Searching for Brahman further, the attention of the sages turned towards the senses. And the sages neglecting the material beings began to concentrate on the immaterial beings.

The senses considered in the Upanishads in connection with the search for Brahman, are besides the sight[12] and the hearing,[13] the speech,[14] the *manas*[15] and the breathing (*prana*).[16] The *manas* is taken here for an internal sense. It is called the receptacle (*Ayatana*). It receives and connects other senses and in this respect it corresponds to the Thomistic ‘sensus communis.’ But *manas* in the Upanishads has no stable meaning. It stands sometimes, as we shall see later, for a modification of the faculty of will and sometimes, for the highest intuitive faculty. In the same way *prana*, though it stands here in the plural for senses and in the singular for the sense of breathing, elsewhere it stands for the soul.

The sages searched for Brahman in all these senses considering one or the other as the Supreme for one reason or other. Thus, for instance, some sages considered speech as the Supreme, identified it with Brahman and meditated upon it. And the reason why speech was considered as the Supreme lies in the fact

that through speech everything is known. "Speech makes us understand the Rig-Veda, the Your-Veda, the Sama-Veda and as fourth the Atharvana, as the fifth the Itihasa-purana (the epics) ... heaven, earth, air, ether, water, fire, gods, men, cattle, birds, trees, all beasts down to worms, midge and ants; what is right and what is wrong; what is true and what is false; what is good and what is bad; what is pleasing and what is not pleasing. For, if there were no speech, neither right nor wrong would be known, neither the true nor the false, neither the good nor the bad, neither the pleasant nor the unpleasant. Meditate on speech (as Brahman). He who meditate on speech as Brahman becomes as it were, lord and master."[17]

Some others gave the superiority to breathing. All senses depend on breathing for their life. When breathing stops they cannot function any more. They all die away.[18] Since breathing was the Supreme, it became the Brahman of these sages and deserved their meditation.

While identifying one sense with Brahman for its superiority over other senses its relation to them

was not neglected. The relation among the senses remained unchanged. Thus, for instance, some sages considered speech, breathing, sight and hearing as different feet of *manas* and while identifying *manas* with Brahman, speech, breathing, sight and hearing became the different feet of Brahman. "Let a man meditate on manas as Brahman ... that Brahman has four feet; speech is one foot, breathing is one foot, sight is one foot and hearing is one foot."[19]

B/ - SEARCH FOR BRAHMAN IN THE RATIONAL FACULTIES

The sages found the rational faculties above the senses. Hence leaving out the senses they began to examine the rational faculties hoping to find out Brahman.

The faculties examined in this connection are *manas*, the faculty of determination,[20] *sankalpa*, the faculty of desire,[21] and *chitta*, the faculty of considering.[22] *Manas* and *sankalpa* are but modifications of the faculty of will. '*Chitta*' stands here for intellect, though Raja Rajendralal Mitra translates it into English

as sensitivity, a faculty according to the author different from the intellect and the will.[23]

Intellect denoted by the word *chitta* is not purely speculative, but it includes also the practical aspect of the intellect.

The sages for some reason or other gave priority to each of these faculties and identified it with Brahman. Thus in some places the *manas* was extolled as the Supreme, for "if a man is determined in his *manas* to read the sacred hymns, he reads them; if he is determined in his *manas* to perform any action, he performs it. If he is determined to have children and cattle, he wishes for them. If he is determined to wish this world and the other, he wishes for them."[24] *Manas*, therefore, is the efficient principle of every action. Without the *manas* nothing can be done. And the sages concluded: "Manas is Brahman. Meditate on manas."[25]

In another place the *sankalpa* is placed above the *manas*. "The sankalpa is greater than the manas. For when a man desires, then he determines in his

manas; then he sends forth speech and he sends it forth in a name. …All these, therefore, centre in desire, consist of desire and abide in desire. And extolling the *sankalpa* above everything the sages meditated on the *sankalpa* as Brahman.[26]

Still in another place *chitta* comes above *manas* and *sankalpa*, for the act of knowing precedes desire and determination. "When a man considers, then he desires, then he determines in his *manas*. All these centre in consideration and abide in consideration."[27] Consequently *chitta* becomes Brahman and is meditated upon.[28]

Besides the faculties, sometimes, their acts and habits are also inspected and identified with Brahman. Thus in some places *dhyana* (meditation),[29] in some places *vignana* (wisdom),[30] and in other places *asa* (hope)[31] enjoys the privilege of being Brahman. The criterion, of course, is that of superiority of one over the other for some reason or other which sometimes appears rather puerile.[32]

$ III = SEARCH FOR BRAHMAN IN THE SOUL

The Upanishadic sages did not stop with the faculties. They saw the soul at the root of the faculties and consequently began to inspect the soul.

A/- EXISTENCE OF THE SOUL AND ITS DIFFERENT NAMES

The Upanishads do not prove anywhere the existence of the soul. The concept of the soul was already existing before the Upanishadic period.

The authors of the Vedic hymns knew its existence. They called the soul sometimes atman[33] and sometimes *manas*.[34] But here too no proof is given for the existence of the soul. It is doubtful whether the Upanishadic thinkers came to the concept of the soul through the Vedic hymns or also by their own genius.

The Upanishads use many terms to indicate the soul. The names commonly used are *atman*,[35] *prana*[36] and *jeeva.*[37] *Atman* does not stand always

to denote the soul. It denotes often the Being, which stands above the soul and from which the soul itself proceeds. It denotes also the self, including both body and the soul.[38] Much confusion has been created by different faulty renderings of atman into European languages. "It is rendered in our dictionaries," writes Max Muller, "by breath, soul, the principle of life and sensations, the individual, one's self, the reflexive pronoun, the natural temperament or disposition, essence, nature, character, peculiarity, the person or the whole body, the understanding, intellect, the mind, the faculty of thought and reason, the thinking faculty, the highest principle of life, Brahma, the Supreme Deity or the soul of the universe, care, effort, pains, firmness, the sun, fire, wind, air, a son."[39] The chief reason for these wrong synonyms lies in the fact that the sages searching for the Supreme Being went, at a certain stage, above the soul and inferred the existence of a Supreme Being, which was also named by the Upanishadic sages as Atman. This Atman, above which the sages never went, was later identified by the sages

of the pantheistic tendency with the whole universe and with every object contained in it, with man for instance, with a beast, with a tree and with a stone. Thus every object became synonymous with Atman.

Prana too, like the word atman, does not stand always to denote the soul. As mentioned above, it stands sometimes for breathing in its singular form and in its plural form it stands often to denote the senses.[40]

B/ - THE SOUL AND THE BODY

The sages clearly distinguished the soul from the body. The soul (atman) is the principle of life and the body is its resting place [41] . The soul is said to be attached to the body like a horse to the cart: "like a horse attached to the cart so is the soul attached to the body."[42] Hence the union of the soul with the body, seems to be, according to the sages, only accidental.

"The body is mortal."[43] When the soul (*jiva*) goes out of it, it gets decomposed. But the soul does not decay like the body.[44] "It is immortal."[45] The

Upanishadic sages do not say why the soul is immortal. The concept of the immortality of the soul was already in existence before the Upanishadic thinkers. The *Satapata Brahmana* speaks of the immortality of the soul in different places.[46] And in this concept the *Brahmanic* thinkers marked a distinction from the views of the Vedic hymns. In the Vedic hymns only the virtuous obtain immortality, the sinner is reduced to nothing.[47] According to the Vedic hymns, therefore, the soul in itself is not immortal. Immortality is a gift. Weber writes: "Whereas in the oldest times (Vedic hymns) immortality in the abodes of the blessed, where milk and honey flow, is regarded as the reward for virtue or wisdom, whilst the sinner or the fool is after a short time, doomed to the annihilation of the personal existence, the doctrine of the Brahmanas is that after death all are born again in the next world, where they are recompensed according to their deeds, the good being rewarded and the wicked punished."[48] Though the *Brahmanic* thinkers assert that the soul in itself is immortal, they do not attempt at giving any proof for it.

The Upanishads follow the *Brahmanic* concept of immortality. Every soul, either wise or foolish, wicked or virtuous, is immortal. The wise and the good soul after the separation from the body enjoys eternal happiness.[49] The foolish and the wicked, as long as they remain such, undergo continuous transmigration.[50]

The theory of transmigration was in germ in the *Brahmanas*. We read in the *Satapata Brahmana*: "A man is born into the world which he has made."[51] And again: "The pious man shall be born in the next world with his entire body (*sarva tanuh*)."[52] The births and deaths of the *Brahmanas* are, however, only in the next world. The *Brahmanas* are silent about the rebirths in this world.[53] The Upanishads transformed the belief of rebirth in the other world into the doctrine of rebirth in this world. It is likely that the belief in rebirth was only being matured in the time of the Upanishads, since some passages of the Upanishads are not familiar with it.[54] "The earliest passages incorporating the belief of rebirth are *Chandogya*, V.3., and *Brihadaranyaka*,

VI.2."[55] Once the theory of transmigration was systematized, it became greatly appealing to the Upanishadic sages, and they passed over all the difficulties that could reasonably be brought against such a theory.

C/ - THE FACULTIES AND THE DIFFERENT STATES OF THE SOUL

The soul exercises its functions in the body through its faculties, both rational and sensitive. Rational and sensitive acts take place by the contact of the soul with the bodily organs through the faculties of the soul. When the soul is in full contact with the body, then man enjoys the waking state.[56]

The contact of the soul with the bodily organs is cut off in the state of sleep and death. In both states the faculties, both sensitive and rational merge into the soul and consequently the sensitive and rational acts become impossible.[57] In the state of dream, however, the impressions acquired in the waking state remain in the soul. These impressions are connected with the organs of the body, and the faculties react to

these impressions and produce dreams. "When the man dreams, the soul takes away the impressions of the waking state; it puts the body aside and creates a dream world."[58] The contact of the faculties with the bodily organs in the dream state is indirect, since the faculties do not directly act in the bodily organs. They directly act on the impressions, which are connected with the organs.[59]

The body gets tired by work in the waking state and to some extent also in the dream state, because there is an indirect functioning also in this state. To give complete rest to the body the soul loses every contact with the body, both direct and indirect, and then the state of deep sleep takes place. The *Brihadaranyaka* Upanishad compares man to a bird. "As a hawk or falcon flying in the sky becomes tired and stretching its wings is bound for its nest, so does this man run for this state (of deep sleep), where falling asleep he craves no desires and sees no dreams."[60] Explaining this passage Sankaracharya says: "As the bird in the illustration goes to its nest to remove the

fatigue due to flight, so the soul (*Jiva*), connected with the results of action done by the contact of the body and the organs in the waking and dream states, is fatigued, as the bird with its flight and in order to remove its fatigue enters its own nest in abode."[61]

The soul in the state of deep sleep is in its purest and simplest form. It is devoid of the impressions of the waking state. The soul in this state cannot know or distinguish anything. It does not even know itself.[62]

Every kind of knowledge becomes impossible in the state of deep sleep for the reason that the soul here assumes its simplest and purest form. It is in itself excluding all dualities. And where there is no duality, no cognition can take place, for every cognition is a conscious act and every conscious act presupposes a subject and an object – in the act of cognition a subject becomes conscious of an object. The soul in the state of its absolute simplicity is beyond the subject and the object and hence unconscious.[63] It acquires consciousness when it differentiates into a subject and an object, into an 'ego' (*aham*) and 'non ego' (*tat*

= that).[64] All the Upanishadic sages did not, however, follow this view.[65] But those who followed this view tried to reduce to absurdity the opinion of those who asserted, that knowledge was possible in the state of the absolute simplicity of the spirit. They argued: "When there is duality, as it were, then one sees something, one smells something, one tastes something, one speaks something, one hears something, one thinks something, one touches something, one knows something."[66] But in the state of absolute unity "what should one see and through what, what should one smell and through what, what should one taste and through what, what should one speak and through what, what should one hear and through what, what should one think and through what, what should one touch and through what, what should one know and through what?"[67]

The merger of the faculties in the state of deep sleep is only temporary. After the interval of rest the faculties contact the organs of the same body and the normal function continues. But when the body gets

emaciated through old age or disease, then the faculties one by one get merged into the soul not to contact any more the same body. Once all the faculties are merged into the soul, it detaches itself from the body like a fruit from its stalk. "When this body becomes thin – is emaciated through old age or disease – then, as a mango or a fig or a fruit of a peepul tree is detached from its stalk, so does this soul, completely detaching itself from the parts of the body, again goes in the same way as it came, to another body for the unfoldment of the faculties."[68] The sages compare in another place the departure of the soul from the body to the departure of a king from his kingdom. The faculties take the place of the officials of the kingdom. "As police-men, magistrates, equerries and governors gather around a king who is departing so do all the faculties gather around the soul at the time of death."[69] But this comparison does not fully express the mind of the sages. At the time of death the faculties do not simply gather around the soul, as officials do around a king; they merge into the soul and become one with it. "The faculty of sight becomes one with the soul, then the

man cannot see; the faculty of smell becomes one with the soul, he cannot smell; the faculty of taste becomes one with the soul, he cannot taste; the faculty of speech becomes one with the soul, he cannot speak; the faculty of hearing becomes one with the soul, he cannot hear; the faculty of thinking becomes one with the soul, he cannot think; the faculty of touch becomes one with the soul, he cannot touch; the faculty of understanding becomes one with the soul, he cannot understand."[70]

The soul leaving the emaciated body goes to new one, and unfolding its faculties begins to function regularly. The mechanism of transmigration is compared to a leech, which passes from one straw to another. "Just as a leech supported on a straw goes to the end of it, takes hold of another support and contracts itself, so does the soul throw this body aside – without knowledge and sensation – take hold of another support, and contract itself."[71]

The faculties, rational and sensitive, merging into the soul and becoming one with it, continue, after the separation from the body, the cycle of transmigration

together with the soul. They are not, therefore, subject to corruption, like the body. They are immortal,[72] and follow the fate of the soul. The sages do not, however, clearly discuss the distinction of the faculties and the soul. Radically there is no distinction at all between the soul and its faculties, for retiring from the body the faculties merge into the soul and become one with it (*eki bhavanti*) and in this state every distinction with the soul is expressly denied.[73] But in as much as the faculties exercise their functions the sages seem to admit their distinction from the soul. The faculties in their functioning state could be classed in the category of the Aristotelian accidents. The question how the spirit acts in the body and how the faculties differ one from the other is fully left out.

D/ - THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CONCEPT

It is clear from what we have seen that the Upanishadic sages, by the time they identified Brahman with the soul, marked a real distinction between the spirit and the body. The spirit is the principle of life and the body is the resting place of the spirit.[74] The

spirit is immortal, beyond corruption, and the body is mortal, subject to corruption.[75] While the spirit separated continues to live, the body separated from the spirit gets decomposed. As we mentioned above, the Upanishadic sages do not give any reason why they considered the soul immortal. But, if we are allowed to interpret the mind of the sages, we may say that the sages exclude mortality from the soul because the soul is in itself, according to them, extremely simple excluding all compositions.[76] Since the soul excludes all compositions, it cannot get dissolved into parts, which it does not have. Hence corruption of the soul is impossible.

Though the Upanishadic sages perceived a real distinction of the spirit from the body, and expressly called the spirit '*asareera'* (without body),[77] yet we are not quite certain whether they excluded every subtle matter from the spirit. There are places where they count among the spiritual beings also beings, which have rather a subtle matter. The sage *Prajapati*, for instance, who was supposed to be one of the most

advanced teachers on the distinction of the spirit from the body, and whose doctrine is exposed in the last chapter of the *Chandogya* Upanishad, taught that the wind, the sky, the lightning and the thunder were without body like the soul. "Unembodied (*asareera*) are the wind and the sky (abra), the lightning and the thunder. They are all without body."[78]

E/ - FAILURE TO DISCOVER BRAHMAN

The Upanishadic sages searched for Brahman in all the four states of the soul, namely, in the waking state, in the dream state, in the state of deep sleep, and in the separated state after death. But they found that the soul in none of these states could stand for the Supreme. Every state presented some imperfection or other.

They examined the waking state and found that the soul in this state was subject to all the miseries of the world. It suffers all the pains inflicted on the body, and undergoes all the changes to which the body is subject. Consequently, they concluded that the soul in such a state could not be considered as the Supreme.

We see clearly, in fact, the discontent of the deep minded Indra when he heard from his teacher, *Prajapati*, that the soul in the waking state was Brahman. *Indra* says: "Verily, the soul in this state feels well-adorned and well-dressed when the body is well-dressed and clean, when the body is clean. Again it feels blind when the body is mutilated. Further, on the destruction of the body, the soul feels destroyed. I can find no good in this."[79]

Finding that the soul in the waking state could not satisfy them, they began to inspect the soul in the dream state. But here too they found that the soul was not free from grief. In the dream state the soul does, of course, sometimes feel quite happy and forgets the miseries of life; but, not seldom, it sees frightful things and feels pain. "In the dream world, the soul attaining higher and lower states puts forth innumerable forms. It seems to be enjoying itself or laughing or even seeing frightful things."[80] Sometimes it feels "as if it were being killed or overpowered by an elephant, or falling into a pit, conjures, in short, at the time whatever

terrible things it has experienced in the waking state."[81] Since the soul was subject to miseries also in the dream state, it could not satisfy the sages in that state. And we find again *Indra*, who was discontent with the soul in the waking state, hearing further from the same teacher, *Prajapati* that the Supreme was the soul in the dream state, protesting also against this idea. " The soul in the dream state," he said, "feels as if it is destroyed, driven away, put into grief and to weeping. Verily I can see no good in this."[82]

The sages, thence, turned their attention to the soul in the state of deep sleep. Some found to their consolation that there were no miseries in this state. The soul enjoys perfect tranquility in deep sleep. No impressions and worries of the past life and none of the future. The soul is in its purest and simplest form beyond evils and desires. "It is soul's pure form beyond desires, free from evils and fearless …in which the soul does not know anything at all either external or internal. That is the pure form in which all objects of desire have been attained and are but the soul, and which is

free from desires and devoid of grief."[83] Consequently these sages concluded: "that in deep sleep, the sleeper is completely at rest and knows no dreaming. It is deathless and fearless. It is Brahman."[84]

But the deep mind of *Indra* was not satisfied even with this state of the soul. *Indra* realized that to reduce the Supreme Being to an unconscious ultimatum is to destroy the Supreme and everything else. He perceived that nothing positive could spring out from an unconscious negative ultimatum. He said: "The soul in the state of deep sleep knows not its own self. It does not know that 'I am this'. It does not know the other beings. It looks altogether destroyed for the time. I can see no good in this."[85] *Indra* evidently wanted something positive to begin and end with; otherwise he could explain nothing.

Failing to find satisfaction in the soul in its state of deep sleep, thinkers of the type of *Indra* examined the soul in its separated state from the body. They found that the soul in this state was not subject to the changes of the body, since it was separated from it.

While the body decays, the soul continues to live. Moreover the soul in this state, "is not in actual contact with desirable and repulsive objects."[86] Nor does the soul attain here a state of negation as in the state of deep sleep, for the soul in its separated state retains the impression of the past life. "It is followed with knowledge, result of the work (Karma) and experience of the past."[87]

Nevertheless, even in this state the soul could not quench its thirst for the Supreme. They realized that the soul even in its separated state manifested its imperfections, for the soul in this state was not free from attachments and desires. Though not in actual contact, the soul is attached to a new body. It desires to unite with another object.[88] Consequently, it does not enjoy self – sufficiency and self – satisfaction and a being of this type cannot be Brahman, the Supreme.

End Note

1 Ch.Up., VII.10.1.

2 Ibid., VII.10.2.

3 Ibid., VII.10.1; VI.8.6; Br.Up., VI.1.10-14.

4 Ibid., VII.11.2.

5 Ch.Up., VII.12.1.

6 Ch.Up., VII.12.2.

7 Ch.Up., IV.3.2-3.

8 Cf. Br.Up., II.1.1-15.

9 Ch.Up., IV.7.3; Cf. also III.18.2.

10 Ch.Up., IV.6.3.

11 Ch.Up., IV.5.2.

12 Cf. Ch. Up., V.1.9.

13 Ibid., V.1.10.Though the Upanishads often make mention also of the other three external senses, namely, the smell, the taste, and the touch, they are not found mentioned in connection with the search of Brahman.

14 Cf. Ch. Up., V.I.8.

15 Ibid., VI.6.2.

16 Ibid., V.I.12.

17 Ch.Up., VII.2.2.

18 Ch.Up., V.I.6-15; Br.Up., VI.I.1-14.

19 Ch.Up., III.18.2.

20 Cf. Ch.Up., VII.3.1.

21 Ibid., VII.4.1. *Sankalpa* is rendered into English differently by different authors. Raja Rajendralal Mitra translates it by will, Cf. Raja Rajendralal Mitra, *Twelve principal Upanishads*, Vol.III. p.224. Max Muller follows him and adds: "Sankalpa includes conception, determination and desires" *S.B.E*. Vol. I p.112, note 112.

22 Cf. Ch.Up., VII.5. According to Sankara "chitta is the nature of thinking that which has the Knowledge of the present time and which has the power of knowing the use of the past and the future." Raja Rajendralal Mitra Ed. *Comment on the Chandogya Upanishad*. Vol.III p.226. - According to Max Muller "chitta implies here consideration and reflection". *S.B.E*., Vol.I p.113 note 2.

23 Raja Rajendralal Mitra, "We use sensitivity as its equivalent", says the author, "that word being now used as a general term to denote the capacity of feelings as distinguished from intellect and will" – *Twelve Principal Upanishads*, Vol. III, p.226 note I.

24 Ch. Up., VII.3.1.

25 Ch. Up., VII.4.1.

26 Ibid.,2.

27 Ch. Up., VII.5.1.

28 Ibid., 2.

29 Ibid., VII.6.1.

30 Ibid., VII.7.1.

31 Ibid., VII.14.1.

32 We see it said, for instance, that power is greater than understanding, because "one powerful man shakes a hundred

men of understanding. If a man is powerful, he becomes a rising man. If he rises, he becomes a man who visits wise people. If he visits them, he becomes a follower of the wise people. If he follows them, he becomes well taught, well informed, docile, intelligent, able to act and full of Knowledge."

33 Cf. R.V., I.154.5 – also Hopkins, *Religion of India*, p.56.

34 Ibid., X.58 – also Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, p. 26.

35 Cf. Ch. Up., VIII.4.1.; VIII.5.1.2.; VIII.7.1-4.

36 Ibid., VII.15.1., also Max Muller, *S.B.E.*, Vol. I,p.120. note 1.

37 Cf. Ch.Up., VIII.8.1-5.

38 Cf. Ch.Up.,VI.11.3.

39 Max Muller, *S.B.E.*, Vol. I, p. XXVIII.

40 Cf. Ibid. p. 58.

41 Ch.Up.,VIII.12.3.

42 Ibid. This reminds us of the Platonic doctrine of the union of the soul with the body.

43 "Sariram andam mritana." Ch.Up.,VIII.12.1.

44 "Givapetam vava kiledam mriyata na givo mriyata." Ch.Up.,VI.II.2.

45 Ch.Up., VIII.7.1.

46 Cf. XI.27.33; XII.8.3.31. Cf. also Weber, in *J.R.A.S.*, 1865.p.306; Ait. Brahmana, III.44;XI.2.6.

47 Cf. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I,p.134.

48 Weber in *J.R.A.S.*, 1,1865,p.306.

49 Ibid., IV.4.6, 8. In the Upanishads the wise are identified with the good and the foolish with the wicked.

50 Ibid., IV.3.38; IV.4.3; IV.4.6.

51 Sat.Brah., VI.2.2.27.

52 IV.6.1.1; Cf. also XI.8.6.;XII.8.3.31.

53 Cf. S.Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 246.

54 Cf. Ibid.

55 Ibid., p. 250.

56 Cf. Br. Up., IV.1.3.10-12

57 Ibid., IV.4.2; IV.3.21-22.

58 Cf. Br. Up., IV.3.20.

59 Ibid., IV.3.10-11.

60 Ibid., IV.3.19.

61 Swami Madhavananda, *The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad with the Commentary of Sankaracharya*, Advaita Ashram, Mayavati. p. 665.

62 Cf. Br. Up., IV.3.23-32.

63 Ibid.

64 Br.Up.,I.4.1.

65 Cf. Br. Up., IV.5.13., Ch. Up., VIII.11.

66 Br. Up., IV.3.23-32; Ch. Up. 8.11. 2-3

67 Ibid., Cf. also IV.3.23-32.

68 Ibid., IV.3.36.

69 Br. Up., IV.3.38.

70 Ibid., IV.4.2.

71 Ibid., IV.4.3.

72 Cf. Br. Up., IV.3.23-30.

73 Ibid.

74 Cf. Ch. Up., VIII.12.1.

75 Ibid., VI.II.2-3.

76 Cf. Br. Up., IV.3.23-30.

77 Ch. Up., VIII.12.1.

78 Ch. Up., VIII.12.2.

79 Ibid., VIII.9.1.

80 Br. Up., IV.3.13.

81 Ibid., IV.3.20.

82 Ch. Up., VIII.10.2.

83 Br. Up., IV.3.21.

84 Ch. Up., VIII.II.I.

85 Ch. Up., VII.11.1-3.

86 Ch. Up., VIII.12.1.

87 Br. Up., IV.4.2.

88 Ibid., IV.2,6,7. Great attempts have been undertaken by the later Indian Philosophical Schools on the problem of desire, which has been laid down by the Upanishadic sages as the root of all the miseries of the world.

CHAPTER IV

THE HIGHEST CONCEPT (MONOTHEISTIC TENDENCY)

$ I = FROM THE SOUL TO THE SUPREME

A/ - THE GREAT THIRST

When the Upanishadic thinkers reached the conclusion that neither the corporal beings, nor the faculties of the soul, nor the soul itself could be the ultimate reality, and that the ultimate reality was beyond all these, their whole search turned towards that Supreme Being which stood above the whole universe. And at this stage their thirst for the Supreme became more intense than ever before. No being in their grasp could diminish their thirst pretending anymore to be the Supreme, since they knew by this time the limitations of the whole universe.

With a heart full of desire and hence void of contents, the sages travel throughout the country in search of teachers to obtain definite instructions on the Supreme. They fast for weeks and weeks and undergo hard penances to grasp the most Sublime Being. "Brahmins seek to know him by the study of the Veda, by sacrifice, by gifts, by penance, by fasting, and he who knows him becomes a monk (*muni*). To find out that (the Supreme) sages leave their homes and become mendicants."[1] *Kshatriya* princes give up their thrones and voluntarily take up slavery to get instructed on Brahman. *Janaka*, the Emperor of Videha, tells *Yagnavalkya*, the great teacher of Brahman: "Sir, I give you the empire of Videha and myself too with it to wait upon you."[2] Brahmins of great repute, finding in their *Kshatriya* disciples deeper insight of the Supreme, humble themselves to the extent of discarding cast prestige and dignity, and request their disciples to give them instructions on Brahman."[3] We read, for instance, in the *Brihadaranyaka* Upanishad the wellknown Brahmin scholar *Balaki* of

the *Garga* family giving instructions to *Ajatasatru*, the king of Benaries on Brahman. The Brahmin teacher proposes to his *Kshatriya* disciple different beings, one by one, as Brahman, the Supreme. The disciple rejects all of them, one by one, giving his reasons. The teacher gets convinced of the reasons of the disciple and realizes finally that the prince was better informed of the doctrine of Brahman. With a child's humility the great Brahmin teacher says: "I approach you as a student."[4]

Sometimes the teachers fail to check or control the reasoning of young minds. They threaten their disciples with death for going too deep into the question of the Supreme. The warning of *Yagnavalkya* to *Gargi* is well known. *Yagnavalkya* says: "Do not question too much, lest your head fall off. In truth you are questioning too much about a divinity about which further questions cannot be asked. Gargi, do not over-question."[5]

Riches and glories fail to attract women. They throw everything at the feet of Yagnavalkya. What they

want is eternal happiness, which is attained only through the knowledge of the Supreme.[6]

B/ - BRAHMAN, THE SUPREME ABOVE THE SOUL

The Upanishadic sages never doubted about the existence of a Supreme Being, as, in fact, no human mind could reasonably doubt about it. The concept of the existence of the Supreme Being remained in their mind always unchanged. Only the nature of the Supreme underwent changes according to the evolution of the concept of the most perfect. Some thinkers, as we saw above, remaining in a corporal level identified the Supreme with bodily objects thinking that one or the other or the totality of these would be the most perfect. Others ascending to an incorporeal level identified the Supreme with the higher beings of the universe. When the sages realized that the Supreme could not be any bodily object they did not jump from this to the illogical conclusion: That the Supreme Being does not exist. Nor did they draw such a conclusion when they found that not even the soul, the most perfect

and the most sublime being of this universe, could be considered as the Supreme. They took it for granted that Brahman, the Supreme, existed beyond all doubt.

Their attempt was only to discover Him, to possess Him and be eternally happy. Thus, when they realized that a certain being which was considered, so far, as the Supreme, could not stand any more as the Supreme owing to its imperfections, they simply said that the Supreme was above that imperfect being, and, when finally they realized that not even the soul, the most perfect and the most sublime being of this universe, could be the Supreme, they affirmed that the Supreme was above the whole universe. By this time some of the Upanishadic sages had also reached the concept that everything that existed should ultimately proceed from one being which is self-existent and the Supreme. And we find Ajatasatru strongly asserting that "from the Supreme proceed all souls (prana), all worlds, all gods[7] and all beings."[8]

Brahman, the Supreme, which stood above the whole universe including the soul, and from which the

soul itself proceeded like other beings was called sometimes by the name 'Pragnatman,'[9] but often by the simple name '*Atman'*. Thus, in spite of the transcending of the sages above the soul, the equation, 'Brahman = Atman', remained. Atman here did not, of course, denote the soul. It denoted Brahman, the Supreme above all the beings of the universe including the soul.[10] But the sages of the Pantheistic tendency changed this equation to its previous stage, i.e. by *Atman* they meant the soul (*Atman*) and consequently by the equation 'Brahman = *Atman'* they meant the *Atman* (the soul) in its highest state was the same as Brahman. *Atman* is supposed to be in the highest state when all its desires are satisfied and consequently it does not transmigrate any more.[11] The whole of Hindu Philosophy is built upon the equation 'Brahman = Atman'. The sages of the monotheistic tendency understood Atman as the Supreme Being above and really distinct from the soul (*Atman*), and those of the Pantheistic tendency identified Atman with the soul or considered the latter a mere modification of the former. The predominant tendency is certainly

pantheistic. Both monotheistic and pantheistic concepts are in the way of development in the earliest Upanishads. The Pantheistic ideas we shall discuss later. Here we are concerned only with the monotheistic ideas.

$ II = THE DESCRIPTION OF BRAHMAN, THE SUPREME

Reaching the concept of Brahman above the universe, the sages gave Him a negative and a positive description.

A/ - THE NEGATIVE DESCRIPTION

The negative description of Brahman consists in excluding from Him all the imperfections that are found in the limited Beings, owing to which precisely they were excluded, one by one, from being the Supreme, and this exclusion of the imperfections from Brahman resulted practically in denying that Brahman is a corporal being or a spirit with imperfections.

The sages excluded body from Brahman by denying in Him all corporal attributes. Brahman is

'neither gross nor subtle, neither short nor long, neither red (like fire) nor fluid (like water). He is without shadow, without darkness, without air, without space, without taste, without smell, without eyes, without light, without breath, without a mouth, without measure, having no within and without. He does not eat anything nor is eaten by anybody.'[12] Brahman does not decay like the body. "He transcends hunger and thirst, decay and death."[13]

Brahman is spirit, but not like the soul with imperfections. The soul, in fact, is subject to many changes. But Brahman is immutable.[14] The soul undergoes the miseries of life. It feels pain, feels sorrow and it is afraid of many things.[15] But Brahman is beyond all miseries. "It does not feel pain, it is without sorrow."[16] It is not afraid of anything.[17]

According to the Upanishadic sages the chief manifestation of the imperfections of the soul consists in its desire for objects. The fact that the soul desires an object shows evidently that there is something wanting in the soul. If the soul would have had

everything in itself, its desire for another object would be inconceivable. Brahman is not of this type. He is free from all desires and attachments.[18]

By giving Brahman a negative description and consequently excluding from Him all imperfections, the sages did not exclude from Him all the perfections that are found in the limited Beings. The perfections that entail no limitations in themselves, such as knowledge, goodness etc (perfectiones simplices) exist in Brahman.

They are not, of course, in the same manner as they are in the limited Beings. They are in the Brahman in an 'eminentiori modo'(in a more eminent manner). To express this idea the Upanishadic sages frequently use the words "Neti, Neti" (not this way, not this way),[19] i.e. not in the manner in which the limited beings have got their perfections.

But Sankaracharya, the great Indian monist, for whom the reality in its highest form is without attributes (*Nirguna*) understands 'Neti, Neti' as 'not this, not this.' And since Brahman is described by the

Upanishadic sages as 'not this, not this,' according to some, nothing positive can be attributed to the real nature of Brahman. The perfections commonly attributed by the Upanishadic sages, such as, intelligence, knowledge, bliss etc., are all superimposed on Brahman. They do not belong to his true nature, which is beyond all these. Nay, even the names Brahman, Atman etc., are superimposed on Him. Sankaracharya writes: "It (the Supreme) cannot be as, 'it is such and such', as we can describe a cow by saying: 'There moves a white cow with horns.' Brahman is described by means of name, form and action superimposed on it, in such terms as, 'Knowledge, Bliss, 'Brahman' and 'Atman'. When, however, we wish to describe its true nature free from all differences due to limiting adjuncts, then it is an utter impossibility. Then there is only one way left, viz.; to describe 'It' as 'Not this, not this', by eliminating all possible specifications of 'It' that one may know of."[20] To confirm his opinion the author refers to the dialogue of king Vaskali and the sage Bahva. The king asked the sage to explain to him the true nature of the Supreme

Being. But the sage without uttering a single word kept silent. When the king repeated the same question, the sage broke out into the answer: "I tell it to you but you do not understand it, the Supreme Being is peaceful, quiet (*Santo yam Atma*)."[21] Nothing can be said about Brahman. He is silence.

Reducing the ultimate reality to a state bereft of all attributes Sankara takes a position practically not different from that of the Buddhist nihilists against whom he fought all his life. And owing to this, in fact, he is being accused even today, as he was in his own times, of being a hidden Buddhist. Dasgupta writes "Sankara and his followers borrowed much of the dialectic form of criticism from the Buddhists. His Brahman was very like the sunya (nihil) of Nagarguna. There seems to be much truth in the accusations against Sankara by Vignana Bikshu and others that he was a hidden Buddhist himself. I am led to think that Sankara's philosophy is largely a compound of Vignana-Veda and Sunya-Vada Buddhism with the Upanishad notion of the self (Atman) superadded."[22]

Following Sankara great Sanskrit scholars, like Max Muller and Roer, render into English the words 'Neti, Neti' by 'not this, not this.'[23] Dasgupta, though he also understands 'Neti' as 'not this,'[24] does not jump from this to the conclusion that no positive perfection can be attributed to Brahman. He stops by saying that Brahman is not like the beings of our experience. "They (the Upanishadic sages) tried some of the sublime powers of nature and also many symbols. They found that by whatever means they tried to give a positive and definite content of the ultimatum Brahman, they failed. They could only say that it was not like aught that we find in experience."[25]

With due respect to these great scholars we may be allowed to observe that the word 'Neti' does not mean 'not this', for 'Neti' is composed of *na* (not) and *iti* (thus-this way). According to phonetic rules of Sanskrit na iti becomes 'Neti' and it means 'not thus', 'not this way' etc., but never 'not this.'[26] The sages asserting that Brahman, the Supreme, is 'not this way', mean, we may safely say, that the perfections of the

Supreme are not in the same manner as the perfections of the limited beings, without thereby excluding the 'perfectiones simplices' from Brahman. The scholastics would, instead of "Neti, Neti', use the expression 'eminentiori modo'(in a more eminent maner). The 'analogy' is implicit in the 'Neti' of the Upanishadic sages. And thus the perfections of the limited beings and those of Brahman, according to the mind of the sages, could be analogical. In this context it is to be noted that Sankara adopts rather an epistomological method in his search for truth, and therefore, in that light the ontological values of his experiences have to be assessed.

B/ - POSITIVE DESCRIPTION OF BRAHMAN

1) Brahman in Himself

Brahman is self-existent (*suayambhu*).[27] The sages do not say why Brahman is self-existent, as in fact, very often they give no reason for their assertions, especially when they treat the attributes of Brahman. All the same it is quite evident that the concept of the

self-existence of Brahman was the logical outcome of their search for the Supreme. A made Supreme is no Supreme, for above the Supreme will stand its maker, and this involves contradiction.

Brahman is one. It is clear, though the Upanishadic sages do not expressly declare it, that to admit more than one Supreme is to admit no Supreme at all. The unity of Brahman is not an invention of the Upanishadic sages. We saw that some of the pre-Upanishadic sages had already overcome polytheism and reached the unity of Brahman. The Upanishadic sages continued their speculation on this basis of unity. Their reason, of course, confirmed the reasonableness of admitting only one Supreme. All the same orthodox minds did not completely lose sight of the polytheism of the Vedic hymns, and it is taught, though seldom, also in the Upanishads. But reason always rebels against polytheistic concept and found rest only in the unity of God. We read, for instance, in the *Brihadaranyaka* Upanishad[28] a dialogue between, sage *Yagnavalkya* and his disciples about the number of gods. The

disciples ask: ‘How many gods are there, Yagnavalkya?’ The sage counting all the Vedic gods replies: ‘three hundred and three and three thousand and three.’ But the young minds could not get satisfied with this answer. They repeated the same question: ‘How many gods are there Yagnavalkya?’ The sage saw that the minds of his disciples were tending towards unity. Hence he classified all the gods in different categories and reduced their number to thirty-three. But even this number was too big for them. They solicitously went on repeating the question until at last *Yagnavalkya* declared that God was one. This one God is Brahman.[29]

Brahman is pure being and he is full (*purna*) with perfections.[30] His perfections are endless (*ananda*).[31] The fullness and the endlessness of Brahman are not in a quantitative sense so that one may say that the perfections of Brahman are but an indefinite extension of the perfections of finite beings. If Brahman would be full and endless in a quantitative sense, then He would have lost some thing and become

less by communicating something to others. But "Brahman never becomes less."[32] He remains always full and endless.[33] The fullness and endlessness of Brahman are rather in a qualitative sense so that we may call Him infinite and not indefinite. An 'analogia' (*Neti, Neti*) and not an 'univocitas' lies in between the perfections of Brahman and those of the limited beings.

Since Brahman is full, there is no potentiality in Him to get actuated. We may call Him, according to the mind of the sages, 'Actus Purus.' In fact, *Katha*, one of the oldest Upanishads after the *Brihadaranyaka* and the *Chandogya*, reducing all the perfections of Brahman into one, defines Him by 'He is':

Not by speech, not by 'manas',
Not by sight can He be apprehended.
How can He be comprehended
Otherwise than saying by 'He is' (*Asti*)?

He can indeed be comprehended by the thought 'He is' (III. 12. 13).

It is likely that some of the Upanishadic sages reached by this time, the concept of a pure spirit. They seem to remove from Brahman all the attributes of matter and conceive Him above matter, also above its subtle form. "Brahman is neither gross nor subtle."[34] He is pure intelligence (*vignanaghana*).[35] From a passage of *Chandogya* Upanishad, however: "Is the supreme (*Atman*) within me. He is lighter than a corn, or a barley, or a mustard, or a canary seed or the substance within it."[36] Some may deduce that the Upanishadic thinkers did not exclude matter completely from Brahman; matter is in its lightest form in Brahman. But the idea of the Upanishadic thinkers in using these comparisons, seems to be, not to assert that Brahman is composed of matter, though lightest, but to help the imagination of the disciples who cannot think anything purely spiritual, destitute of every matter. The disciples are taught to direct their minds from gross matters to subtle ones and are thus slowly prepared to the concept of a pure spirit. In fact the sages do not stop asserting that Brahman is lighter

than anything they could think of; they affirm at the same time with equal force that Brahman is "bigger than the earth, bigger than the sky, bigger than the heaven and bigger than all these regions put together."[37] And again "Both the earth and the heaven exist in Brahman (*Atman*). Both *Agni* (fire) and *Vayu* (air), both the sun and the moon as also lightning and stars and whatever else exist in the universe as well as what do not, all exist in Brahman."[38] To be small and big in size at the same time for a being (with matter) is impossible.

Brahman is bliss (*ananda*).[39] Perfect bliss is found only in Brahman. To admit perfect bliss in limited beings is a contradiction.[40] The sages try to give an idea of the supreme bliss of Brahman by the following verse:

"He who is perfect of body and prosperous among men, the ruler of others and most lavishly supplied with all human enjoyments is the highest bliss of men. This human bliss multiplied a hundred times makes one unit of bliss of the forefathers who have won the worlds.[41]

The bliss of the forefathers who have won the worlds, multiplied a hundred times, makes one unit of the bliss of the Gandarvas.[42] The bliss of the Gandarvas, multiplied a hundred times, makes one unit of the bliss of the ritual gods who gained their divinity by rites.[43] The bliss of the ritual gods, multiplied a hundred times, makes one unit of the bliss of those who are gods by birth. The bliss of the gods by birth, multiplied a hundred times, makes one unit of bliss of Prajapati.[44] The bliss of Prajapati, multiplied a hundred times, makes one unit of bliss in the world of Brahman. This indeed is the supreme bliss. This is the state of Brahman."[45]

This is only a simile. As it stands, the bliss of Brahman does not surpass the species of the bliss of finite beings. It is only an indefinite extension of the latter. And Sankara, the monistic champion interpreting this passage says: "All the happiness up to that of the world of Brahman, compared with this happiness is like a drop of water compared with the sea."[46] The drop of water is of the same nature as the waters in the sea.

The difference is only quantitative. But the idea of the Upanishadic sages in using the simile is not to explain that the bliss of Brahman is an indefinite extension of that of limited beings. By using this simile the sages intend to express that the bliss of Brahman is beyond all the happiness of the limited beings. The bliss of Brahman, in accordance with their concept of 'Neti' is analogical and not univocal.

The description of Brahman as pure being, knowledge and bliss became greatly appealing to the later Indian minds. Later Indian thinkers frequently call Brahman "sat—chit—ananda" (being—knowledge—bliss). Nay, attempts have been made, under Christian influence, to build up a Hindu concept of Trinity on the basis of sat—chit—ananda. This attempt is favoured by the verse of *Brihadaranyaka* Upanishad: "Brahman who is knowledge and bliss. He is the principle."[47] But it should be remembered that *chit* and *ananda* remain in the Upanishads attributes of Brahman.

Brahman is goodness. He is, as we shall see soon, at the root of all our love, father, mother, sisters and brothers, all become dear to us owing to Brahman, the pure love.[48]

Brahman is eternal. He has neither a before nor an after,[49] and He is always full in his perfections. The definition of Boetius: "interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio,"[50] * seems to agree perfectly with the Upanishadic concept of eternity.

Though Brahman has got many attributes, yet at the same time, He is most simple. "There is no difference whatsoever in Brahman."[51] "He should be realized in one form only."[52] He who sees difference in Brahman does not understand Him. He remains in ignorance and is consequently subject to transmigration, or as *Yagnavalkya* has it: "He who perceives in Brahman difference, as it were, goes from death to death."[53] Hence, according to the Upanishadic sages, there is no real distinction between the divine essence and the attributes, nor between one attribute and another. More detailed expressions on

the question are not, however, found in our two early Upanishads.

2) Brahman in relation to the universe

Brahman is the efficient cause of the universe. He is "the breath of breath (*prana*), the Eye of the eye, The Ear of the ear and the Manas of the manas."[54] The sages expressly call Brahman "Sarvasya Kartha" (the Maker of all).[55]

They realized in their search for the Supreme that the universe was limited and being such it could not be self-existent. The universe manifested the exigence of a self-existent being as its maker. The Upanishadic concept of "Sarvasya Kartha" corresponds to the "Visuakarma" (the maker of the universe) of the Vedic hymns,[56] and it is not unlikely that the Upanishadic sages were influenced by the concept of the "Visuakarma" of the Vedic Hymns to form their "Sarvasya Kartha."

As Brahman is the maker of the universe, He is the Preserver, the Controller, the Ruler and the Lord of it. "He is the Controller of all (*sarvasya vasi*), the

Lord of all (*Sarvasyesana*), the sovereign Ruler of all (*Sarvasyadhipati*) and then Preserver of all (*Bhutapala*)."[57] Brahman knows everything. Being the first Cause, He is "the Seer of seeing, the Hearer of hearing, the Thinker of thinking and the Knower of knowing."[58] From Him nothing is concealed.[59]

Brahman wills everything (*Sarvakama* = all willing). Both the animate and the inanimate beings obey the orders of his will. *Yagnavalkya* tells *Gargi*: "By the command (*prasasana*) of the Immutable (*Akshara*), O Gargi, the sun and the moon are held in their positions.[60] By the command of that immutable, O Gargi, heaven and earth, maintain their positions. By the command of the Immutable. O Gargi, what are called moments (*nimisha*), hours (*muhurtha*), days and nights, half months, seasons, years, all follow their courses. By the command of that Immutable, O Gargi, some rivers flow to the east from the white (snowy) mountains, others to the west and the others to the other quarters. By the command of this Immutable, O Gargi, men praise the givers, gods follow the sacrificer and the forefathers the oblation."[61]

If everything follows blindly the command of Brahman, what about the liberty of man? This seems to have been a great problem also for the Upanishadic sages. But nowhere in the upanishads this question is explicitly discussed. Here and there the sages stress the functions of the first cause and neglect, nay, sometimes destroy the functions of the second causes. We find, for instance, *Yagnavalkya*, in his dialogue with *Gargi*, stressing the functions of Brahman, destroying the functions of the human soul. He says: "There is none that sees but Brahman, there is none that hears but He, there is none that perceives but He, there is none that knows but He."[62]

Brahman who is the efficient cause of the universe and its final goal and whose finite expressions the beings of the universe are (below) lies at the root of all our love. We love the limited beings in relation to Brahman, the absolute goodness. *Yagnavalkya* in his famous dialogue with his wife, *Maitreyi*, gives out a long passage on this. He says: "It is not owing to the husband that, he is loved, but owing to the Supreme

(Atman=Brahman) that he is loved. It is not owing to the wife that she is loved but owing to the Supreme that she is loved. It is not owing to the sons that they are loved but it is owing to the Supreme that they are loved. It is not owing to the wealth that it is loved, but it is owing to the Supreme that it is loved. It is not owing to the animals that they are loved, but it is owing to the Supreme that they are loved ... it is not owing to all (in short) that all are loved, but it is owing to the Supreme that all are loved."[63]

Brahman is the final goal of the universe, "Therefrom (from Brahman) doth the universe proceed, therein doth it merge and thereby is it maintained."[64] But this verse is mixed up with pantheism and the thinkers of the pantheistic tendency turn it to their favour. They argue that since the universe proceeds from Brahman, merges into Him and is maintained by Him, it should be of the same nature as Brahman and consequently "the universe is verily Brahman."[65]

The whole universe is in Brahman, the cause. "Both heaven and earth exist in Him. Both fire and air,

both the sun and the moon, both the lightning and the stars and whatever exists in this (universe) as well as what do not- all exist within Brahman."[66] The universe is the expression of the infinite Supreme in different finite forms.[67] The sages seem to be very close to the concept of an exemplary cause. But nowhere is this concept explicit in the two earliest Upanishads, and more detailed explanation on the existence of the universe in Brahman ends in identifying the former with the latter.

Brahman is present everywhere in the universe. "He is, indeed, below, above, behind, before, right and left."[68] There is nothing, which is not pervaded by Brahman. "He envelops the whole universe."[69] He is in the innermost part of the human heart (*hridaya*),[70] as well as in the remotest unmanifested ether.[71] These concepts are, however, dispersed all over the Upanishads and nowhere do the sages explain why Brahman is present in all the beings of the universe. All the same their concept of Brahman as the Maker and the Preserver of the universe, together with an

implicit notion of an exemplary and final cause, seems to be at the root of their concept of the presence of Brahman in the universe.

Brahman, who is immanent in everything, is at the same time transcendent. The sages use different expressions to show the transcendence of Brahman. "He is above the heaven and below the earth."[72] "He is greater than the heaven, greater than the sky, greater than the earth and greater than all these regions."[73] He is Maker,[74] the Preserver, the Lord and the Ruler of the universe[75] and the whole universe follows His command.[76] The perfections of Brahman are not in the same way as the perfections of the universe (Neti, Neti), they are in a more eminent manner. While in the 'Neti' (not this way) the "analogia proportionalitatis'[*] is implicit, in the dependence of the universe on Brahman the 'analogia attributionis'[*] is more explicit, and we may not misinterpret the mind of the sages, if we say that between Brahman and the universe there is an 'analogia' both proportionalitatis' and 'attributionis.' To express both the transcendence

and the immanence of Brahman, Mundaka, one of the thirteen principal Upanishads, says: " He is more distant than what is distant and at the same time more near than what is near (near in this body)."[77]

Transcendence and immanence are not opposed to one another. They are quite compatible with each other and are both essential requisites of a true monotheism. Transcendence does not mean that God is separate from the universe. It indicates that God is really distinct from and infinitely superior to the universe, which depends upon Him in its being (*esse*) and functions (*operari*). An ontological separation of the universe from God is an absurdity, for the very moment the universe gets separated from God, its Maker and Preserver, it becomes equal to nothing. As transcendence does not mean separation, immanence does not mean identification. An identification of the Infinite with the finite is an evident contradiction. The immanence of God means, in the aspect of an efficient cause, the dependence of every being upon God, the Maker and the Preserver, for its being (*esse*) and

functions (*operari*), in the aspect of an exemplary cause, the vestige of God in every being, and in the aspect of final cause, the glory of God in the functioning of every being. Thus to use the words of the Upanishadic sages "God envelops the whole universe", i.e., as its efficient, exemplary and final cause.

At the bottom of our notions of transcendence, immanence, analogy and causality lies the notion of the participated nature of the universe. They are all centered and connected in the concept of participation. The concept of participation is nowhere explicit in the Upanishads. But it is in an implicit and undeveloped form in the Upanishadic concepts of transcendence and immanence, 'Neti' and dependence, desire and insufficiency.

The passages, which declare the transcendence of Brahman, give great pains to all those who try to reduce the whole of the Upanishadic teachings to a monistic unity. They are forced to neglect these passages or explain them away. The passages, which

express the immanence of Brahman, do not give less strain to them. Sankaracharya, the uncompromising Indian monist, says that the concept of immanence of Brahman is laid down by some of the Upanishadic sages to help the weak-minded persons who cannot grasp Brahman and the universe as one monistic unity which is the real concept.[78]

Monism, be it pantheistic or materialistic, is incompatible with the concept of transcendence and immanence, for while monism is a negation of real duality, the concept of transcendence and immanence is an absurdity where there is no real duality.

It should, however, be observed that monotheism and monism are not systematically exposed in the Upanishads. They are mixed up without any order. Sometimes in the author, nay in the same text, we may find both. And as regards this queer mixture of monotheism with monism, we should bear in mind that the Upanishadic thinkers, though in few places they make an open revolt against the teachings of the Brahmanas and those of the Vedic hymns, try in general

to develop the Pre-Upanishadic teachings, conciliate contrary views and adapt their own views to those of their predecessors. We saw that the pre-Upanishadic teachings were mixed up with monotheistic and pantheistic ideas, and there is nothing extraordinary about it if the Upanishadic sages, attempting at a conciliation and development of monotheistic and pantheistic ideas, ended sometimes in confounding both. To add to this original confusion, the teachings of the Upanishadic thinkers had to undergo for centuries all the disastrous consequences of an oral tradition- such as lapses, additions and modifications- since they were committed to writing only long centuries after they were thought and uttered.

End Note

1 Br. Up., IV.4.22.

2 Ibid., IV.23.

3 Ibid, II.1.

4 Ibid, II.I.14.

5 Ibid,III.6.1.

6 Ibid,II.4.1-2.

7 The Gods of the Vedic hymns and the *Brahmanas* remained, as we mentioned above, in the mind of the sages as lower deities. These deities did not have any importance in the Upanishads for the search of Brahman. They were accepted sometimes as intermediary gods to explain the production of the Universe (below).

8 Br.Up., II.1.20. We shall see later how Ajatasatru explaining the mode of production of the universe from the Supreme falls into Pantheism.

9 Cf. Br.Up., IV.3.21.25.

10 The word 'Pragnatman' or simply 'Atman' which stood to denote Brahman, the Supreme, is ordinarily rendered into English by the words 'Universal Self' or 'Universal soul'. But these renderings have an idealistic bias behind them and easily reduce the whole of Upanishadic doctrine into Pantheism. Consequently the monotheistic ideas of the Upanishads are neglected or explained away and the interpretation remains one sided.

11 Cf. Br. Up., IV.4.6.

12 Br. Up., III. 8. 8.

13 Ibid., III.5.1.

14 Ibid., III. 8. 8.

15 Ibid., IV.3.8.20.

16 Ibid., IV.4.22.

17 "That great birthless Atman is unchangeable, immortal, undying, fearless and Brahman. Brahman is indeed fearless". Br. Up., IV.5.15.

18 Cf. Br. Up., III.8.8.; Iv.3.21.

19 Br. Up., II.3.6; III.9.26; IV.2.4; IV.4.22; IV.5.15.

20 Swami Madhavananda, *The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad with the Commentary of Sankaracharya*, Advaita Ashram, Mayavati. p.344.

21 V.S., III.2.22.

22 Dasgupta, *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, pp.493-94.

23 Cf. The respective verses in their translation of the Br. Up.

24 Cf. op.cit., p.110.

25 Dasgupta, *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 44.

26 The correct translation of 'Neti' is found in the Italian translation directed by Belloni-Filippi: *Due Upanishad*, Lanciano 1912. The translator uses '*Non cosi, non cosi*' for the respective verses.

27 Br. Up., II.6.3.; IV.6.3.

28 Cf. Br. Up III.9.1.

29 Cf. Ibid., III.9.9.

30 Cf. Ibid., V.I.I.

31 Ibid., II.4.12.

32 Ibid., III.8.8.

33 Cf. Ibid.,V.1.1.

34 Br. Up., III.8.8.

35 Cf. Ibid., II.4.12.

36 Ch. Up., III.14.3.

37 Ibid., III.14.3.

38 Ibid., VIII.2.3.

39 Cf. Br. Up., III.9.28.7.

40 Cf. Ch. Up., VII.23.1

41 "Those who by such ceremonies as the Sradha have obtained the world of the forefathers"- E. Roer, *The Twelve Principal Upanishads,* Vol. II, p.350.

42 "Celestial Minstrels" – *Swami Madhavananda, The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad with the Commentary of Sankaracharya, Advaita Ashram, Mayavati. P. 688*

43 The Upanishad divide gods into gods by birth, ie., created as such and gods who attained divinity not by birth but by the merit of sacrifices as the fire offerings etc.

44 Prajapati stands here above all the other gods. He is the maker of the universe together with gods.

45 Br. Up., IV.3.33.

46 Comment on the Br. Up., - Cf. Roer, op.cit., Vol. II.

47 Br.Up.,III.9.28.7.

48 Cf. Br. Up., IV.5.6.

49 Ibid., II.5.19; IV.4.20.

50 Boetius, *De Consolatione,* III, Prosa 2. * "Complete perfect and simultaneous possession of everlasting life".

51 Br. Up., IV.4.19.

52 Ibid., IV.4.20.

53 Ibid., IV.4.19.

54 Br. Up., IV.4.18.

55 Ibid., IV.4.13.

56 Cf. above p.30.

57 Br. Up., IV.4.22. Cf. also V.6.1. "He is the Lord of all, Ruler of all and governs whatever there is".

58 Br. Up., III.4.2.

59 Ibid., II.5.18.

60 "Follow their courses", Max Muller, *S.B.E.*, Vol. XV, p.138 note 2.

61 Br. Up., III.8.9.; see also Katha Up., VI.2., Tait. Up., II.8.

62 Br. Up., III.8.11; Cf. also Ch. Up., III.14.4.

63 Br. Up., IV.5.6.

64 Ch. Up., III.14.1.

65 Ibid.

66 Ch. Up., VIII.I.3.

67 Br.Up., II.5.19; Ch.Up., VI.2.3-4.

68 Ch.Up., VII.25.1.

69 Ibid., III.14.4.

70 Cf. Ibid., VIII.3.3.

71 Cf. Br. Up., III.7.8.

72 Br. Up., III.8.7,8.

73 Ch. Up., III.14.3.

74 Cf. Br. Up., IV.4.13.

75 Cf. Ibid., IV.4.22; V.6.1.

76 Cf. Ibid., III.8.9.

77 Mundaka III.1-7.

* 'Analogy of proportionality'

* 'Analogy of Atribution'

78 Raja Rajendralal Mitra and E.B. Cowel – *The Twelve Principal Upanishads*, Vol. III, 2nd ed., pp.249-250.

CHAPTER - V

PANTHEISM

Reaching the concept of a Supreme Being beyond the soul and the whole universe, the attention of some of the Upanishadic sages was called, in particular, to two important problems, viz. the origin of the universe and the eternal happiness of man. They wanted to investigate fully these two questions and give a decisive solution to both. But in their bold attempt some of them ended with pantheistic explanations.

$ I = THE ORIGIN OF THE UNIVERSE

We saw in the preceding chapter that some of the sages who reached the concept of a Supreme Being beyond the whole universe proclaimed that the whole universe proceeded from that Supreme Being. But they failed to understand how the finite universe could proceed from the infinite Brahman. The concept of creation as production from a state of absolute

nothingness by the power of an Almighty God was not clear to their mind and hence every attempt to explain the finite universe from an infinite God ends in an impossibility, if not in a contradiction. The infinite God easily becomes the stuff, or the material cause of the finite universe with all the disastrous consequences. Anyhow, some sages attempted at a solution and proposed some theories, which they thought, would solve the problem. These theories are not anywhere systematically exposed. They are scattered all over in the usual fragmentary style of the Upanishads. The most important theories mentioned in our two earliest Upanishads are: A. the theory of an intermediary god; B. the theory of emanation and; C. the theory of forms.

A/ - THE THEORY OF INTERMEDIARY GOD

The sages found an infinite distance between the infinite God and the finite universe, but at the same time the finite universe proceeds from the infinite God. How to cover the distance and connect the finite with the infinite? The most efficient means some could

think of to connect the finite with the infinite was to introduce an intermediary being which should be a little below the infinite and at the same time above all other beings. In fact some sages introduced an intermediary god between Brahman and the other beings. This intermediary god is called sometimes *Prajapati*, sometimes *Hyranyagarbha* or *Viraj.*[1]

In forming the concept of the intermediary god the Upanishadic sages were helped by the pre-Upanishadic teachings. We saw in the *Satapata Brahmana*, *Prajapati*, then the Supreme God, trying to produce the universe: “In the beginning only the Prajapati existed. He thought to himself. ‘How can I obtain descendents?’ He tortured Himself and mortified Himself. Out of his mouth he produced the god Agni (fire), and from Agni other things were produced.”[2] But in the later part of the *Satapata Brahmana*, with the advent of Brahman the Supreme, *Prajapati* descended to the second grade and the making of gods and of the rest did not belong anymore to *Prajapati* but to Brahman.[3] The Upanishadic sages reconciled the contrary views of the *Brahmanas*. They

attributed to *Prajapati* the making of the gods and of the rest, but *Prajapati* himself was considered a production of Brahman. *Brihadaranyaka* Upanishad says: "Brahman made Prajapati and Prajapati the Gods."[4]

In the like manner, we saw that the Rig-Vedic hymns presented in some places *Purusha* as the Supreme God. The origin of the universe was then explained by cutting *Purusha* into different parts. The Upanishadic sages placing an intermediary god explained the origin of the universe by a differentiation of the intermediary god, as *Purusha* was differentiated in the Vedic hymns. "He (the intermediary god) differentiated himself threefold making the sun (*Aditya*) the third form and the air (*Vayu*) the third form. So the intermediary god is divided in three ways. His head is the east and his arms that (north east) and that (south east). And his hind part is the west, his hip bones that (north east) and that (south west), his sides the south and the north, his back heaven, his belly the sky, and his breast this earth."[5]

The Upanishadic concept of the intermediary god corresponds to the platonic Demiurgus. But it should be observed that the Upanishads are very vague and obscure in the concept of the intermediary god and very often only insinuations are given.

The theory of the intermediary god could not explain the origin of the finite universe from the infinite, for, the intermediary god should be either infinite or finite and the problem remains in 'statu quo.'

B/ - EMANATION THEORY

Others neglected the intermediary god, realizing probably that the intermediary god was not more useful than not having any, and tried to explain the origin of the finite directly from the infinite as an emanation. *Ajatasatru* compares this emanation to the thread that comes out of the spider or to the sparks that come forth from the fire. "As a spider comes out with its thread or as small sparks come forth from the fire thus do all souls (*prana*), all worlds, all gods (*devas*), all beings come forth from that Atman (Brahman)."[6]

The theory of emanation is not in itself opposed to creation, nay, creation is a sort of emanation. St. Thomas Aquinas* says: “non solum oportet considerare emanationem alicujus entis particularis ab aliquo particulari agente; sed etiam emanationem totius entis a causa universali, quae est Deus.”[7] But the concept of creation differs from the Upanishadic emanation in this, that, while in creation God always remains the efficient, exemplary and final cause but never the material cause or the stuff of the universe, in the concept of the Upanishadic emanation, God becomes also the material cause and consequently God and creature become of the same nature. In the simile of the spider and the thread, the thread that comes out of the spider is of the same nature as its store in the spider and more clearly in the simile of the sparks and the fire, the sparks that come forth from the fire are evidently of the same nature as the fire. In fact, some thinkers clearly realized that the identity of nature between the emanating principle and the emanated being was inevitable, as long as the emanating principle was taken as a material cause, and consequently they

acknowledged that the universe and Brahman were of the same nature and both most perfect. “This (the universe) is most perfect (*purna*). That (Brahman) is most perfect. If we take the most perfect from the most perfect, the most perfect remains.”[8] But here these sages were trapped in the difficulty, as to how there could be two most perfect beings, and how the universe with all its visible imperfections could be the most perfect being.

C/ - THEORY OF FORMS

Others defended a form theory. They said that the finite and the infinite are but different forms of one and the same Brahman. “Brahman has two forms, the material and the immaterial, mortal and immortal, finite and infinite.”[9] The universe is, therefore, the material, mortal and finite form of Brahman, who has, at the same time, an immortal, an immaterial, and infinite form. But a great difficulty arises: How can one and the same being be finite and infinite? Some sages try to solve this difficulty by saying that Brahman is always infinite and the universe always finite. The

universe is the finite manifestation of the infinite Brahman. Brahman has the power to manifest Himself in different finite forms although He remains always infinite. This power of manifesting is called *maya*. "He became every form of every form, thence to manifest His form. Indra appears of manifold forms by His mayas. He is ten; He is many thousands, nay, innumerable (at the same time). He is Brahman, Who has not a before nor an after, nor a beside nor a without."[10] Here Brahman is identified with *Indra*, because in the Rig-Vedic hymns the power of manifesting in different forms was attributed to *Indra*. "Indra takes many forms quickly by his maya."[11] The concept of *maya*, therefore, already existed before the Upanishads. What belonged to *Indra*, the Supreme, in Vedic hymns, is now attributed to Brahman, the Supreme.

The word *maya*, as it stands in the passage, means, besides the power of Brahman or *Indra* to manifest Himself in different finite forms, also the outcome of this power, i.e. the appearances or the manifestations

that result, as terminus, from the power of manifesting - in other words the universe itself. Thus, while *maya* taken in the sense of power of manifesting is identified with Brahman, since He is most simple excluding all compositions, *maya* taken in the sense of appearance or manifestation is identified with the universe. It is the connecting link between the finite and the infinite. On one aspect it is finite and on the other infinite.

By saying, therefore, that Brahman has two forms, the finite and the infinite, the sages do not affirm that the infinite is finite, but only that the finite is the external manifestation of the infinite. But are these external manifestations in finite forms '*res in se*' (real) distinct from Brahman or simply different modes of the infinite Brahman? These sages do not discuss the question. But others, like *Uddalaka Aruni*, conceive these external manifestations as mere names and forms (*nama rupa*) of one and the same Brahman, and thus reduce them all to mere modes or, to use the scholastic term, to accidental forms, of Brahman who is the only substance (*advaida*=one without a

second).[12] According to *Aruni*, the universe of plurality is in relation to Brahman as different vessels of earth or different articles of gold are in relation to the substance earth or gold. *Aruni* tells his son, *Svetaketu*: "Verily child, as the knowledge of the nature of a single clod of earth makes manifest the nature of all earthen objects and shows that the various fictile fabrications indicated by different words and names are of truth only earth. Child, as the knowledge of the nature of a single lump of gold shows that all articles of gold indicated by different names are mere variations of forms, but in truth gold alone. Child, as by the knowledge of a nail cutter, all iron instruments are known to be modifications of that substance, differing only in name and words, but of a truth iron alone, so is the subject I allude to (i.e. Brahman and the world)."[13]

Brahman, the only substance, which lies behind every being, is in the most abstract and undifferentiated state.[14] It is bereft of all individualities. It is neither

this nor that. It is behind this and that.[15] This or that being is its concrete existence in individual form. "When it differentiates itself as life, it is called vital force; when it differentiates itself as the organ of speech, it is called the organ of speech; when it differentiates itself as the eye, it is called the eye; when it differentiates itself as the ear, it is called the ear; when it differentiates itself as the 'manas' it is called the 'manas'. These are merely its names according to its differentiations"[16].

Since Brahman, in Himself, is in the most abstract and purest state beyond this and that, nothing can be attributed to Brahman, for every attribute would lower Brahman to a differentiated level, and thus Brahman would be no more in Himself in the undifferentiated state. And here the view of Sankara is logical, when he says that the Brahman of the Upanishads is without attributes (nirguna) in an inconceivable state. But this is not the only view laid down in the Upanishads, as it is clear from what we have seen above.

Reducing Brahman to an abstract and undifferentiated state bereft of all individualities and the universe to its modifications or differentiations, these sages did not explain the origin of the universe, for, it may be asked: How does Brahman, the abstract and undifferentiated substance, which is neither this nor that, neither finite nor infinite, get differentiated into plurality in individual forms? This question is not anywhere solved in these Upanishads.

$ II = THE ETERNAL HAPPINESS OF MAN

The Upanishadic sages, as we mentioned above, began their search of Brahman in order to become eternally happy. The eternal happiness consists, according to them, in attaining a desireless state. The desireless state is the one in which all the desires are actuated in such a way that one should not desire anything more. Now, this desireless state is the state of Brahman, the Supreme, who is the only one without desires. Consequently, the soul attaining a desireless state attains, ipso facto, the state of Brahman, in other words the soul becomes Brahman.[17]

According to the Upanishadic psychology, the means to become a certain being after life is to know it during life. "Whatever man reflects upon in this life, he becomes the same hereafter."[18] The means, therefore, to become Brahman and to be eternally happy is to know Brahman. "Knowing Brahman I become immortal,"[19] "those who know Brahman become immortal, while others attain misery alone."[20] Further, the perfect method of acquiring knowledge, according to the Upanishadic sages, is meditation. Consequently the most efficacious method of becoming Brahman is to meditate upon Brahman. This is the reason why, as we mentioned above, the Upanishadic sages unfailingly meditated upon the object, which was identified with Brahman.

Defending the Knowledge of Brahman as the means of eternal happiness the Upanishadic thinkers differed from the teaching of the Brahmanic sages who held that the eternal happiness was acquired by sacrificial rites. Since the Brahmanic sages defend as means of eternal happiness the sacrificial rites, these

acquired the name 'Karma Khanda' (portion dealing with action = rites) and the Upanishads defending knowledge as the means of eternal happiness were called 'Gnana Khanda' (portion dealing with knowledge).

The becoming of Brahman created great difficulty. When the Upanishadic sages reached the concept of Brahman as an infinite being above the soul and the whole universe, they were, in fact, in a great dilemma. On the one hand they had the problem: how can the finite soul become the infinite Brahman? And on the other hand: how can the finite become desireless, unless it becomes the most perfect, i.e., unless it becomes the infinite Brahman?

To save, it seems, the infinite nature of Brahman, *Yagnavalkya* interprets in some places the becoming of Brahman as a possessing of Brahman. In his dialogue, for instance, with prince *Janaka* the sage asserts that the becoming of Brahman is equal to an embracing of the soul by Brahman. "That is his form-beyond desires, free from evils, and fearless … the

soul fully embraced by the Supreme (*Pragnatman*) not knows anything at all, either external or internal. That is his form – in which all objects of desire have been attained and are but the Supreme."[21] And in his dialogue with *Maitreyi*, he hints that the becoming of Brahman is equal to a union of the soul with Brahman in which the soul loses its consciousness.[22]

But in other places, *Yagnavalkya* expressly says that to become Brahman is equal to be the same as Brahman, and moreover the soul by becoming Brahman does not attain something, which the soul was not. The soul is Brahman in reality, and the process of becoming Brahman through knowledge consists in the mere realization of the soul that it is Brahman. "Being but Brahman the soul becomes the Brahman."[23]

Only the soul of the wise realizes that it is Brahman. The soul of the ignorant does not know this truth. The soul of the wise realizing that it is Brahman, the Supreme, is freed from all desires since desire has no place in the most perfect being, and thus becomes eternally happy, for, as *Yagnavalkya* asks: "If one

knows the Supreme as 'I am this' then desiring what and for whose sake will he suffer the ills."[24] The ignorant soul not realizing that it is Brahman, the Supreme, remains subject to desires and attachments, and consequently goes on transmigrating.[25]

Yagnavalkya and thinkers like him did not stop with identifying the human soul with Brahman. They went further. Since the human soul is the same as Brahman and Brahman is immanent in every being, they deduced the conclusion that the human soul is in every being. Nay, they changed the immanent Brahman to the very intrinsic principle of every being, and consequently the human soul that is the intrinsic principle in man, became at the same time the intrinsic principle of every being. And we find *Yagnavalkya* telling *Uddalaka Aruni*: "He who inhabits the earth but is within it, whom the earth does not know, whose body is the earth, and who controls the earth from within, is the Internal Ruler, your own immortal soul. He who inhabits water and controls water from within is the Internal Ruler, your own immortal soul … He

(in short) who inhabits all beings, but is within them whom no being knows, whose body is all beings, and who controls all beings from within, is the Internal Ruler, your own immortal soul."[26]

Further, the intrinsic principle or the soul of every being was considered as the very essence of every being and thus Brahman the Supreme became the essence or substance of every being. And the sage, *Uddalaka Aruni* instructs his son, *Svetaketu*, saying: "All this universe has the Supreme deity for its soul. That deity is the Substance (*Satya*). He is the Universal soul. Thou art He, o *Svetaketu*."[27]

Brahman is therefore the substance that lies under every being. The individuals, you, he, it and I are all Brahman in as much as the substance that lies under them is Brahman.

CONCLUSION

The Indo-Aryans had undergone great changes regarding their concept of God before reaching the Upanishadic period. They began their Vedic period with

polytheism. But polytheism was not the first form of Aryan worship. Monotheism had preceded the Vedic polytheism.

The Vedic polytheism lasted for a considerably long time. Before the end of the Vedic hymns, however, the Indo-Aryans returned to the concept of one Supreme Being. This Supreme Being was known in the Vedic hymns by the names, *Hyranyagarbha*, *Visuakarman* and *Prajapati*. But before the end of the Brahmanas *Hiranyagarbha*, *Visuakarman* and *Prajapati* became departmental deities or the attributes of the Supreme God and the Supreme God was known almost exclusively by the name Brahman.

The Upanishadic thinkers began an ardent and laborious search to find out this Brahman. They examined every striking object of the universe and meditated upon it hoping to become Brahman and thus to be eternally happy. In the early stage they identified Brahman with material objects, such as water, fire, air etc., as some of the pre-Socratic Greek philosophers did in their search for the ultimate principle. The sages

accepted every striking material being, in turn, as Brahman, but none could render satisfaction to their soul. They accepted the totality of the whole material world, but to no purpose – matter could not satiate the spirit.

Leaving the material beings and the external world the sages ascended to an immaterial level and retired into their senses. They identified the senses both individually and collectively with Brahman. But the senses also were too low for the human spirit to find its satisfaction. The senses directed the sages to higher faculties. The sages ascending higher and at the same time retiring more intimately into themselves identified the rational faculties, nay the soul itself with Brahman. But they did not find the satisfaction they were seeking. The soul manifested its insufficiency. It desired for something above it. It showed the exigence of a self-existent desireless Supreme.

The Upanishadic search of Brahman resembles very much the Augustinian search of God laid down in the tenth book of the Confessions. St. Augustine

writes: "I asked the earth for God, and it answered me, 'I am not He'; I asked the sea and the depths and the creeping things, and they answered, 'We are not the God, seek thou above us'; I asked the breezy gales, and the airy universe with all its denizens replied: 'Anaximenes is mistaken, I am not God'; I asked the heaven, sun, moon, stars, 'Neither are we', said they, 'the God whom thou seekest'; and I asked unto all things which stand about the gateways of my flesh, 'Ye have told me of God, that ye are not He; tell me something of Him, 'and they cried with a loud voice', He made us."[28] The saint thence turns towards his soul and finds God even above the soul and concludes telling his soul: "Thy God is unto thee, even the life of thy life."[29] The Upanishadic sages, in the like manner, after their long search for Brahman conclude saying: " Those who have known the life of the life, the eye of the eye, the ear of the ear, the 'manas' of the 'manas' have realized the primordial Brahman".[30]

The Upanishadic sages reached the concept of a self-existent pure Being above the universe and not

unlikely also the concept of a pure Spirit. It is not exclusively an impersonal monistic unity that the early Indian thinkers discovered. There is a strong monotheistic tendency especially in the earlier parts of the Upanishads.

For the followers of Monotheism God is a personal being, really distinct from and infinitely superior to the universe. God is one, most simple, eternal, pure intelligence, pure love and perfect bliss; God is the maker, the preserver and the ruler of all; God is present in every being, knows every being and directs every being.

In Pantheism, the real distinction between God and the universe disappears, and the finite and the infinite end in an undefinable substance. Individuals are but differentiations into plurality of one and the same substance, which is Brahman. "*Aham Brahmasmi* (I am Brahman)".[31] " *Tatuam asi* (You are that=Brahman)"[32] - these are but the logical consequences of such a position. These conclusions were accepted by later Hindu thinkers as the great

sayings of the wise (*Mahavakia*) and are held today by many Indians as the greatest discoveries of the early Indian mind. Indian Pantheism has received warm welcome also in the minds of some of the non- Indian thinkers who, as faithful defenders of a Spinozian substance or of an Idealistic Pantheism accept cordially anything that is similar.

Many of the Upanishadic concepts have, no doubt, great similarities with western philosophies especially with those of a Platonic tendency, although the concepts embodied in the earliest Upanishads were uttered well nigh three hundred years before Plato was born. The concepts set forth in the two earliest Upanishads are still in their initial and elementary stage. They get evolved more and more in the later Upanishads and pass into the minds of the Indian Schoolmen who systemising them produce the great *Darsanas* which are among the most marvelous achievements of human genius.

End Note

1 Cf. Br.Up., I.5.14;V.5.1.

2 Br.Up., II.2.4.

3 See above. It may be observed, in particular, that when Brahman was considered the Supreme Deity, He was called also *Prajapati* (Lord of creatures) and at the same time god *Prajapati* continued to exist as a separate, but lower, deity.

4 Br.Up.,V.5.1. Here the making of gods only is mentioned, but the *Chandogya* Upanishad IV.17, mentions also the making of the rest by *Prajapati* from different gods.

5 Br.Up.,I.2.3.

6 Br.Up.,II.1.19.

* .It is necessary not only to consider the emanation of a particular agent, but also the emanation of the whole being from the universal cause that is God"

7 Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol*., I.Q 45.art.1

8 Br.Up.,V.1.1.

9 Br.Up., II.3.1.

10 Br.Up.,II.5.19.

11 Br.Up.,VI.47.18.

12 Cf. Ch.Up.,VI.2.1.

13 Ibid.,VI.I.4-6.

14 Cf. Br.Up., I.4.7.

15 Cf. Br.Up., I.4.7.

16 Ibid.

17 "The man who does not desire never transmigrates. Of him who is desire without desires, who is free from desires, the objects of whose desire have been attained does not transmigrate. Being

but Brahman he enjoys the state of Brahman. When all the desires that dwell in his heart are gone then he having been mortal becomes immortal and attains Brahman in this very life (i.e., without further transmigration)"- Br. Up., IV.4.6,7. The word immortal stands here for eternal happiness and the word mortal for misery, i.e., continuous transmigration, but not the destruction of the soul. The words, "When all the desires that dwell in heart are gone," "who is without desires, who is free from desires", are sometimes interpreted in the sense of annihilation, and thus, attaining the desireless state may not mean the actuation of the desires but their annihilation. The Buddhist nihilism and, to some extent, also the Yoga philosophy seem to proceed on these lines.

18 Ch.Up.,III.14.1.

19 Br.Up.,IV.4.18.

20 Ibid.,IV.4.15.

21 Br.Up.,IV.3.21.

22 Cf. Ibid., IV.5.14.

23 Ibid., IV.4.6; Cf. also Ibid., IV.4.7; IV.4.12; IV.4.23.

24 Br.Up.,IV.4.12.

25 Ibid., IV. 4.6.

26 Br.Up., III.7.3-15.

27 Ch.Up., VI.8.7. The word *Satya*, though ordinarily stands to denote truth, here it stands for essence or substance.

28 St. Augustine, *The Confessions*. X.6.2,3.

29 Ibid., X.6.4.

30 Br. Up., IV.4.18.

31 Br. Up.,I.4.10.

32 Ch.Up.,VI.8.7